

Albert Perry

Instantly I could feel it, as a seven year old empath, the sadness that over crowds the room, a room filled with his parents, his loved ones, and sadness. As we walked through the doors of a funeral home in Hollis, Maine, we would walk by my aunt and her husband, and they would greet us, trying to force a smile, with streaks of hurt running down their faces, and look of pain in their eyes. They had moved out of Maine a year before the accident but their son stayed for college. Their son, Albert Perry, was only 20 years old when he was killed in an accident caused by drunk driving.

My aunt and her husband, Holly and Troy Perry, had relocated to the sunny state of North Carolina. It had always been a dream of theirs to move out of Maine, until the worst day of their lives. Completely oblivious, they got a call from an officer stating their son had been in an accident back in Maine. Their son was dead, Albert was dead. They flew back to Maine so they could say goodbye to him and plan the funeral. After an investigation they learned that one of Albert's friends had been driving and Albert occupied the passenger seat. That night the air became foggy and they were both under the influence of alcohol. The driver underestimated a turn coming up and went off the road into a tree. Albert was not wearing a seatbelt so he flew out through the windshield and died on impact. The friend was severely injured but survived the crash. The headlines of the news read "two young college students involved in a fatal car crash due to driving under the influence." Which occurred more commonly in a college town than anyone would like to admit.

When I walked into the funeral home and felt the sorrow and regret, I couldn't comprehend it. I was too young to truly understand what had happened. It was an open casket and I remember looking at my mom in confusion, he didn't look real. Looking back he looked

different because of all the makeup and work they had to do to his body, to make it less gruesome, less sickening, so his family could say goodbye to a face and a body they would recognize. I watched, I sat, and asked when the food would be ready to eat. It became obvious my mom was annoyed with my lack of understanding and patience for the situation, another wonderful perk of being an empath. Being hyper aware of everyone's feelings got overwhelming so I went outside. Everyone was sad, I knew everyone was sad, and I could feel that but for some reason the sadness I felt did not belong to me. I was not sad, I barely knew him, his death did not affect me whatsoever, but it did them. And I could feel it, as if it was a wave of sadness radiating off of them and trying to consume me.

Surrounding the funeral home was a typical neighborhood. When I stepped outside I came across a little boy in the driveway of the house next door. He was a couple years younger than me but I decided I would go play with him because anything was better than being in that room. Frantically my mom came rushing outside looking for me, I guess I forgot to mention where I was going. She interrogated me about why I left and who the little boy was. Just then my aunt and her husband had come out of the funeral home to help look for me. When they saw me, my mom, and the little boy, they came over to make sure everything was fine. The boy starts to explain to my mom who he is and that he lived next door. My aunt had taken one look at that little boy's face before she started to sob. At that moment all she could see was her son. Wishing he was still that little boy, wishing she could hold him again, wishing she could say goodbye, wishing he was not dead... But he was.

Her husband managed to guide her back inside, my mom and I followed. I waved goodbye to that little boy and the funeral went on. Eventually the funeral ended. Albert was in the ground and everyone started heading their separate ways. My aunt had made it a point to

mention how the driver, Albert's friend, never showed up. Consumed with guilt he couldn't show his face. He survived at the hands of the wheel, and Albert didn't. He killed his best friend. He killed someone's son. He killed someone's brother, someone's cousin, someone's boyfriend. And to show up at the funeral would likely cause a dispute. I did not know any parent that would not be filled with rage. Especially any parent that had to plan their own child's funeral, when it's supposed to be the other way around. Parents are not supposed to outlive their children.