

Bandaïd Tourniquet

By: Austin Huibers



## Chapter 1: The House with the Shaking Walls

Snow clung to the window like wet paper. Inside, the small house trembled whenever her parents shouted. Six year old Lily sat on the floor and arranged bits of lint into the shape of animals. It was the only game she knew that did not invite angry attention.

Her father slept on the couch with his chest rising in short uneven breaths. Her mother paced the kitchen as if a swarm of invisible insects chased her through the small cracks in the floorboards. There was a smell like burned plastic and sour milk that lingered in the air. Lily felt it sinking into her skin, it was unshakeable.

When the knock came at the front door, Lily froze. Her mother's eyes widened. Then the door opened and her world would forever change.

Two officers stepped inside. Behind them stood a woman with silver hair and warm eyes. She looked at Lily as if she had been searching for her for a long time.

"Sweetheart, you are coming with me," the woman said. "It's time for you to learn love dear"

And Lily stepped into the cold air, leaving the shaking house behind. The smell stayed in the home as it was afraid to leave.

## Chapter 2: A Quiet New World

Her grandmother's home sat at the end of a long country road lined with bare trees that looked like fingers reaching into the sky. The house did not shake. The walls did not shout. When the wind pushed against the porch, it sighed instead of screamed. There was a calmness in this environment that was foreign to her.

Grandma Mae cooked breakfast every morning. Pancakes. Eggs. Toast smeared with sweet jam from the neighbor's orchard. She smiled and whistled while she cooked, a low tune that drifted through the kitchen like a soft blanket.

"Food tastes better when you whistle," she said.

Lily believed her, it brought a smile to her face. Smiles were something Lily had to hide in her previous life.

At night, they watched old shows on a small television. Lily leaned against Mae and felt the slow steady beat of the older woman's heart. It sounded strong. It sounded safe.

For the first time in her life, Lily slept through the night.

### Chapter 3: The Sky Changes

Winter warmed into spring. The snow melted, leaving long patches of soft earth behind the house. Lily learned how to plant seeds. Grandma Mae taught her how to push the soil around them with gentle fingers. Every activity they did together was a lesson, every game night ended in smiles and love emanating from the home.

“Everything grows when treated with patience and love” Mae said to Lily with a smile

Lily nodded even though she barely understood. She liked the way her grandmother spoke and the tone of her voice. Every sentence felt like something polished and kept safe in a drawer.

But sometimes Lily noticed Mae sitting in the old chair by the window. She held a photograph of a man who wore a wide brim hat and a smile that reached his eyes. Mae stared at it with a look that Lily did not know how to name.

Summer arrived finally, and the fields turned bright green. Birds filled the air with sharp bright calls, life felt simple and full.

Yet the photograph never left Mae’s side. And almost every night she looked at it for hours.

## Chapter 4: The Commercial

The year progressed quickly and the two bonded quickly and with ease. One cold autumn night, the air felt strangely tense. The sky outside the windows was a deep violet, full of clouds that pressed down on the earth.

Lily sat on the living room floor and colored in a picture of a rabbit. Mae watched a late evening program with a cup of tea resting on her knee.

A commercial flickered across the screen. A man stood in a field of tall grass. He wore a wide brim hat like the one in the photograph. He smiled in the same gentle way.

Grandma Mae dropped the teacup. It shattered on the floor and spilled a trail of dark liquid across the rug. Something was wrong with Mae, something about the commercial brought terror to her face.

“No,” she whispered. “No, not again.”

Her hands shook. Her eyes widened as if the room had suddenly shrunk. She stood and walked in circles, whispering to someone who was not there.

Lily watched with growing confusion. She stepped closer, but Mae backed away and pressed herself against the wall.

“I cannot lose you again,” Mae muttered. “I cannot see that field. I cannot see that hat. I cannot.”

Lily felt something cold spread through her chest. The world did not make sense anymore.

## Chapter 5: The Night

The air outside snapped with cold. Frost formed on the porch railing like tiny shards of white glass. Grandma Mae moved through the house with frantic steps.

She opened drawers. She muttered to her unseen audience. At one point she looked at Lily with eyes that were wide and empty. This was a part of Mae that Lily had never seen.

“You must stay inside,” she said. “Do not follow me.”

Then she walked out the back door.

Lily waited at first. She counted slowly. One. Two. Three. Her fingers trembled. The wind howled like something wounded.

Finally, she stepped outside.

Under the pale moon, Mae stood in the middle of the yard with her old shotgun in her hands. Leaves curled around her boots. Her breath came out in clouds of frantic gasps.

She looked up at the sky, lifted the gun, and the bang tore the night in half,

Lily stood completely still. Autumn leaves letting go of their trees fell onto her hair and hugged her feet. The world became quiet in a terrible way.

She walked to her grandmother and sat beside her. Without understanding anything, she started placed band aids across Mae’s chest. Then across her arm. Then across her face, if you could call it one anymore. She pressed them down with careful fingers as if tending to a wounded doll.

For two hours, the small girl worked in the falling leaves and cold autumn wind. Her breath fogged the air like smoke from a small fire. She didn't quite grasp the gravity of what had happened, but she knew someone who had shown her love for the first time and needed help, and band aids were the only thing she knew how to do. She did not understand.

She only wanted her grandmother to stop hurting.

## Chapter 6: The Car on the Road

A distant engine groaned through the cold night. The headlights swept across the field like searching eyes. The car slowed when the driver saw the small figure in the snow.

The woman stepped out of the car and gasped. Lily looked up at her with a calm expression as another band aid slipped from her fingers.

“I am helping her,” Lily whispered.

The woman picked Lily up with shaking arms. She wrapped her in a warm coat and held her close.

“It is all right,” she said repeatedly. “You are safe. You are safe now.”

Lily buried her face in the coat and smelled fabric softener. It smelled like something clean and far away from the world she knew. She was confused from the woman’s words “you’re safe”. Because in her mind this was the first time, she had ever felt safe with anyone.

She did not cry. She did not understand enough to cry.



## Chapter 7: The New Beginning

The house where Lily stayed next had a soft yellow door. The woman who lived there had gentle eyes and arms strong enough to carry groceries and crying children at the same time. Her husband had a laugh that filled every room with warmth.

They spoke to Lily softly at first. They offered her small choices. “Would you like toast or oatmeal?” “Would you like to draw or play outside?” “Would you like to sit with us while we read?”

Lily learned that people could be patient like Mae was. She learned that adults could be warm. She learned that footsteps did not always mean danger.

Months passed. Lily grew taller. The haunted look slowly left her eyes, but the memories would be burned in for years to come. She laughed, she made friends, and she learned to sleep with a night light instead of a locked door.

Her new parents adopted her on a clear spring morning. When the judge asked if she wanted this family to be her own, she nodded with a small smile.

Her new mother cried. Her new father wiped his eyes when he thought no one could see.

## Chapter 8: The Growing Years

Lily grew into her teenage years with steady confidence. She spent summers at the river, winters by the fireplace, and school years filled with books and friendships. She excelled in art, often drawing old houses and sweeping landscapes that were stunning to the eye.

But sometimes she dreamed of falling leaves, sometimes she felt a certain way when cold win pressed up against her face and sometimes, she woke with her fingers curled as if holding bandaids.

Her parents never pushed her to talk. They simply sat with her when she was quiet, offering the warmth of their presence.

She learned that the past did not vanish. It softened and sometimes it faded. It became something she would learn to carry without breaking. She had a family that was involved and cared about every day of her life.

## Chapter 9: Return

On her eighteenth birthday Lily asked her parents to drive her back to the old country road.

The house where Grandma Mae once lived still stood. The paint was brighter now. The roof no longer sagged. A family played in the yard, their laughter rising into the cold air.

A little girl chased her dog across the snow. The mother called after her with a gentle voice. The father shoveled the walkway with slow deliberate strokes.

Nothing in the yard remembered the old night.

Everything looked alive.

Lily stood still for a long moment. Her breath curled into the cold air. Her parents waited quietly behind her, letting her feel what she needed to feel.

The snow glittered as if it was full of tiny stars.

## Chapter 10: Band aid Tourniquet

Lily stepped forward and touched the fence post. It was smooth and warm from the afternoon sun.

She thought of the small girl she once was. The girl who tried to fix the world with band aids and careful hands. The girl who watched the leaves fall around her as she wrapped love around something already broken.

That girl was still inside her. But she was no longer lost.

She looked at the happy family in the yard and felt no bitterness. She felt only gratitude that life can grow again in a place where it once collapsed.

Her parents stood beside her now. She took each of their hands and squeezed gently.

“You ready to go, sweetheart?” her father asked.

Lily smiled.

“Yes,” she said. “I am ready.”

They walked back to the car as the wind brushed the snow across the lawn like a soft white tide.

And on the fence post, a single band aid rested where Lily had quietly placed it.

Not to heal the past, but to honor the child who tried.

### **Author's Thoughts**

Bandaïd Tourniquet came from one simple image: a little girl in the leaves trying to fix something she cannot understand. That moment could have defined her life, but I wanted this story to show how powerful steady, loving parenting can be.

The grandmother's tragedy, the child's confusion, and the years that follow all point to the same truth. Trauma may shape a beginning, but care shapes the ending. When the girl returns as an adult and smiles at the family now living in that home, it is because she is no longer trapped in what happened there.

This story is my reminder that healing is quiet, slow, and entirely possible when love finally has a chance to stay and support surrounds people.