

Heavy copyedit of the YA novel *Laurel Everywhere* according to Chicago Style.

I wake up in the hospital.

Yes, it's because the tattoo got infected. ~~Yes, it's~~ because I wasn't supposed to jump into a dirty lake right after getting an illegal tattoo. How was I supposed to know? Clare didn't tell me and Lyssa is reckless like that. ~~Since and~~ she's gotten a tattoo before, ~~so~~ I assumed she'd ~~have stopped~~ stop me if it was really all that bad. I've been told it was a stupid thing to do about seventy-five times by my grandmother. "A tattoo?" she says, as if it's the equivalent of cutting off a limb. "Laurel? A tattoo? Seriously?"

Comment [EW1]: I added "it's" here for parallel structure

She's upset, though I think she's more upset about the fact that I got a tattoo than the fact that it got infected and gave me a fever so high that I started having hallucinations about Ghost-Mom. Apparently, I had such a high fever that I sweat through all my sheets and Grandpa had to drive me to the ER in the middle of the night. Oops.

I'm just glad the doctors don't ask a lot of questions about how I got the tattoo in the first place because I don't want Clare to get into trouble for giving me an illegal tattoo.

This is the fourth time I've been to the hospital in the last four months. The first was the accident when we followed the ambulance all the way there even though we knew ~~that~~ there was no way they could have survived. The second was when my dad disappeared and then was found. The third was when he tried to kill himself. And now, the fourth is because I got a tattoo and it got infected. I feel pretty stupid, but at least I'm not in the psych ward ~~so I and~~ won't have to see the nurse who told me he was sorry. I don't want him to feel even ~~more sorry for~~

mesorrier, because, at this point, the number of bad things that keep happening to me is just embarrassing.

The doctors give me some big, blue pills that will make the infection go away. They also had to cut off a bit of my skin so the Rowan tree is missing its bunch of berries. The whole tattoo looks more like a smudge now. They're having me stay here a few more hours until my fever breaks, which is probably more for my grandmother's sake, since she got really worked up about it. She freaked Lyssa out pretty badly; once she saw the infected tattoo, she knew it was Lyssa's doing and immediately called her and forced her to meet us at the hospital. Even though I was really feverish, I swear I could hear her yelling at Lyssa in the hallway.

"Your father is going to be so upset," Grandma tells me after the doctors leave me alone with my grandparents. I feel pretty fine, just a little sweaty and my side hurts from where they made the incision.

"I thought he would like them," I tell her.

"It doesn't matter if he would like them, Laurel! It's a tattoo! And you're fifteen! What has gotten into you?"

Grandpa puts his hand on her shoulder. She sucks in her breath after she says that because it's pretty obvious what's gotten into me: my mom and brother and sister died, and it's all because I wanted pizza.

I look down at the smudge of a tattoo on my side. "It was a tansy," I mutter, "a tansy and a rowan tree. Except now it's just a smudge."

The anger falls off of Grandma's face and is immediately replaced with sadness. She crouches down next to me and places a hand on my cheek. "My beautiful, sweet girl. You made

a stupid decision, but you are my beautiful, sweet Laurel Summers.” She drops her head down to my shoulder and whispers, “I was scared we would lose you too, Laurel.”

“It was just an infection.”

“We didn’t know that. You were yelling at the air and sweating up a storm.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Oh, don’t be.” She kisses me on the cheek and then releases me and wipes her eyes. “I just overreacted.”

Grandma is one of those people who can change moods in the blink of an eye. She can be really mad and then, suddenly, she’s kissing me on the cheek and patting my hand. When I was little, I asked her about it, Sand she told me, “Sometimes emotions aren’t worth holding on to for too long.” Still, Dad used to tell us that it was a terrifying thing to grow up with. Mom always loved Grandma Lucy her, She she said Grandma Lucy was the best stepmother she could have ever asked for.

“Don’t tell Dad about this. Please.” The thought of Dad getting a call at Charles Sanctuary for the Recently Bereaved about his only remaining child being sent to the hospital makes me shiver. He would be so worried, I I don’t know what he would do. He’s already tried to kill himself twice and both those times happened when he knew I was safe and sound. That almost makes it worse; I was perfectly healthy and present, but he still wanted to leave me.

“Oh, I wouldn’t dare,” Grandma says, “You’re going to explain this all to him when he comes home and sees you have a tattoo.”

“I bet you he’ll like it.”

“I bet you he won’t.”

“I hope he comes home soon.”

“Me too.”

Grandma squeezes my shoulder and then moves aside so Grandpa can sit in front of me. He looks like he’s trying very hard to be stern, but Grandpa has never been all that good at being stern. He has a permanent smile in his eyes. One time when we were kids, on a visit to the grandparents, Rowan gave Tansy a haircut ~~when we were visiting the grandparents, and~~ Grandpa was the only one home ~~and, He he~~ tried so hard to lecture us, but he ended up just laughing at how silly Tansy looked. It’s a funny memory, ~~besides-except for~~ the part where Grandma got home and found us.

“You should have told us about it, at least,” Grandpa says to me, “Then we would have had a clue as to what was going on. We tThought you had some deathly fever.”

“Sorry.”

“Shush. I’m sorry.”

“For what?”

He shakes his head and lifts up his arms. “All of this. Everything that’s been happening.”

“Shh. That’s on The List.”

“The List?”

“The List of Things Not To Talk About With Laurel. Apologizing is one of them. I’m tired of people saying sorry to me.”

Grandma shakes her head at me but Grandpa laughs his deep, hearty laugh. It makes me smile and, for a moment, I feel like Laurel again, the Laurel who makes silly jokes and hugs her friends and is very good at keeping quiet when she needs to and doesn’t do disruptive things, like getting a tattoo. That version of Laurel is slowing slowly disappearing, but I feel like I’m her again right now, laughing with my grandpa.

Another voice breaks through our laughter. “I...I didn’t throw the list away, you know,” she says. Hanna stands in the doorway, slightly out of breath. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a crumpled piece of paper and smiles at me shyly, like we’ve just met. “I have it, here—~~I~~ iff you want it.”

“You told me it was a bad coping mechanism.”

“That doesn’t mean I threw it away.” She bites her lip and then she adds, “I’m really sorry.”

“ON THE LIST!”

At first, she looks like she’s scared of me, but then I smile, and she smiles too. I say, “I’m sorry too. And it’s not violating The List if I say it.”

Hanna then flies across the room and practically attacks me with a hug. “Ouch,” I mutter. Hanna is known for having very strong (and rare) hugs, ~~and the~~ The intensity of this one is only heightened by the fact that my tattoo was just infected and stings when she bumps it.

“I’m sorry we weren’t talking,” she whispers.

“I’m sorry I was the one ignoring you. And I’m sorry for saying you stole my grief.”

“I’m sorry for being so worked up about what my mom thinks, and I’m sorry I can’t...I haven’t been able to...”

“We can talk about that part later.”

“I’m a terrible friend.”

“You’re my best friend. Things are jumbled.”

“I think we broke The List a couple of times.”

“You apologized first, so it’s your fault. You started it.”

“Oh, great.” She rolls her eyes, which is a very classic Hanna thing to do, and then finally releases her grip on me. She sniffs and blinks to hold back tears. Hanna has been crying a lot lately, and Hanna is not a crier. Behind her, I see Grandma and Grandpa both move slowly towards the doorway, giving us some time alone.

“I suck at feelings,” Hanna sniffs when they’re out of ear-shot, “~~And~~ and I don’t know if I’m ready to tell my mom and I don’t know how I feel and everything is really...raw.”

I remember what my fever-induced hallucination of Ghost-Mom said about being only fifteen and having time for love and for all the feelings. I tell Hanna, “I don’t know how many feelings a person can possibly have, but I definitely have too many right now.”

“I miss them,” she whispers, “I miss them a lot.”

“Me too.”

“I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

She holds my hand and squeezes. We’re both crying now, and I’m not sure if it’s because we miss my mom ~~and~~ or my siblings, or because we’re in love, or because we’re not in love. Maybe it’s all of the above. I wonder if you can be both in love and out of love at the same time, because that feels like where we are; ~~this~~. This weird place of not knowing ~~which one~~ whether we are ~~in love~~, or ~~which one~~ whether we should be. I wish Mom was here to tell me what to do. Ghost-Mom can only do so much. Plus, the Ghost-Mom that gave me love advice was apparently a fever-induced hallucination, so I suppose I should take her advice with a grain of salt.

“So,” Hanna finally speaks, “You got a *tattoo*?”

I cringe because I half expect her to lecture me about it, but instead she starts laughing and asks, “Can I see it?”

“It’s more of a smudge now because it got infected.” I turn so she can see my smudge tattoo.

“That’s a tree, yeah?”

“Rowan tree. And a tansy flower, but they’ve kind of blended together into one.”

“I love it,” Hanna tells me.

“You won’t love how I got it.”

“Oh, I’m sure I won’t.”

I tell her about Clare the ex-foster sister, and about how her apartment was dingy and covered in posters. I tell her about the stick n’ poke tattoo and how it hurt, but not as much as I thought it would. I tell her about how we went swimming afterwards and she says, “Oh my God. You’re not supposed to do that.” Hanna, the person who plans to never get a tattoo in her life, apparently knows more about tattoo aftercare than both Lyssa and I combined.

“I’m aware. Hence, the infection.”

“You two are idiots.”

“Well-aware. Grandma Lucy made sure to let Lyssa know she thought so.”

“Oh, poor Lyssa. Although, she kind of deserved it. But...poor Lyssa.”

“Yeah!” Lyssa says, her voice traveling in from outside the room, “Poor Lyssa indeed!”

Lyssa is standing in the doorway, still wearing her pajamas from when my grandmother presumably woke her up in the middle of the night. “I heard my name and figured it was my cue to join the conversation.”

“You’re an idiot,” Hanna tells her to her face.

“But I’m a cute idiot!”

“Debatable.”

Comment [EW2]: I couldn’t find a definitively correct way to spell this, but the *New York Times* uses “stick-and-poke” which is another variation to consider. I prefer this spelling, as I think “stick n’ poke” will read more appropriately for both Laurel’s voice and the audience.

Lyssa tosses her sweatshirt at Hanna and nearly hits her in the face, just missing me. Hanna tosses it back and hits Lyssa right in the forehead. "Careful!" I call, "I'm injured!" They both snort and toss the sweatshirt over my head. I close my eyes underneath the soft material because_ if I can't see_ then I don't have to be aware of the fact that I'm in the hospital and that the circumstances of this whole day are incredibly absurd_ ~~and~~ Instead, instead I can pretend that it's just like old times when Hanna and Lyssa and I would play around in the backyard. My mom would point the hose at us from her garden and my dad would call us inside for dinner and Rowan would threaten to steal our food and Tansy would try and get us to play games with her. I miss it. I miss it so much I don't think there are any antibiotics in the world that could heal my heart.

"Can we take you to find the tansy flower?" Lyssa asks me softly. The sweatshirt is still over my head.

"I like my not-tansy flower." The little laminated, pressed flower is still in my pocket. I haven't taken it off my person for days. "But you can still take me, if you want," I add. I say it more for them than for me. Hanna slips her hand into mine and squeezes.

"It'll be fun," Lyssa says.

"Just like how you two getting tattoos was fun?"

Lyssa leans over me and hits Hanna in the shoulder. The three of us end up laughing and the sweatshirt falls off my face and gets tossed around the room until the doctors come in and tell us to stop roughhousing. They take one look at me and say, "Seems like your fever broke."

"Sure did."

"Let's get you checked out. Just promise us you won't go swimming after getting illegal tattoos from stick n' poke artists again."

“Yes, ma’am.”

