

A stylized illustration of a red car driving on a road at night. The road is illuminated by the car's headlights, and another car is visible in the distance. The background is dark blue with white raindrops falling. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

POWER TO PERSEVERE

By Jessica Turner
as told to Lynne Crandall

About a month before my 16th birthday, my family went on a road trip across the United States to visit some Church history sites. I didn't mind being in the car for so long because my family always had a good time. I remember getting in the car the day after we visited Winter Quarters, Nebraska. It was raining like crazy. I got in the back seat, grabbed a blanket, and curled up to listen to the rain as I fell asleep.

The next thing I remember was feeling like I was spinning out of control. Later I learned that our car had hydroplaned and crashed into the cement barrier under an overpass. I vaguely remember someone telling me I'd broken my leg and was heading into surgery.

Soon after that while I was recovering in the hospital, my dad came into my room. He sat down next to me on my bed and reached for my hand. Somehow I felt I already knew what he was going to say.

"Honey," he said, "do you know where you are?"

"In the hospital," I replied.

"Do you know what happened?"

"We were in a car accident."

"Has anyone told you about the rest of the family?"

I paused and then answered no.

He said that everyone was going to be OK—except for my mom. She didn't make it.

I was expecting to feel crushing sadness right away, but I didn't. Through my initial shock, somehow, for some reason, I felt peace, a sweet feeling that I could trust God that things would be all right.

Lying there in the hospital, I remembered one particular Church history site we had seen two days before the accident: Martin's Cove, Wyoming. Many pioneers died there from hunger and exposure to the snow and cold weather. I remembered seeing piles of rocks placed over graves and thinking about how much faith it took for the rest of the pioneers to pick up their handcarts and keep going. That story impressed me. As I thought about that experience, I knew that the pioneers persevered and that I would have to as well, including



With a broken leg
and a broken heart,
I needed healing.
Hope got me through.

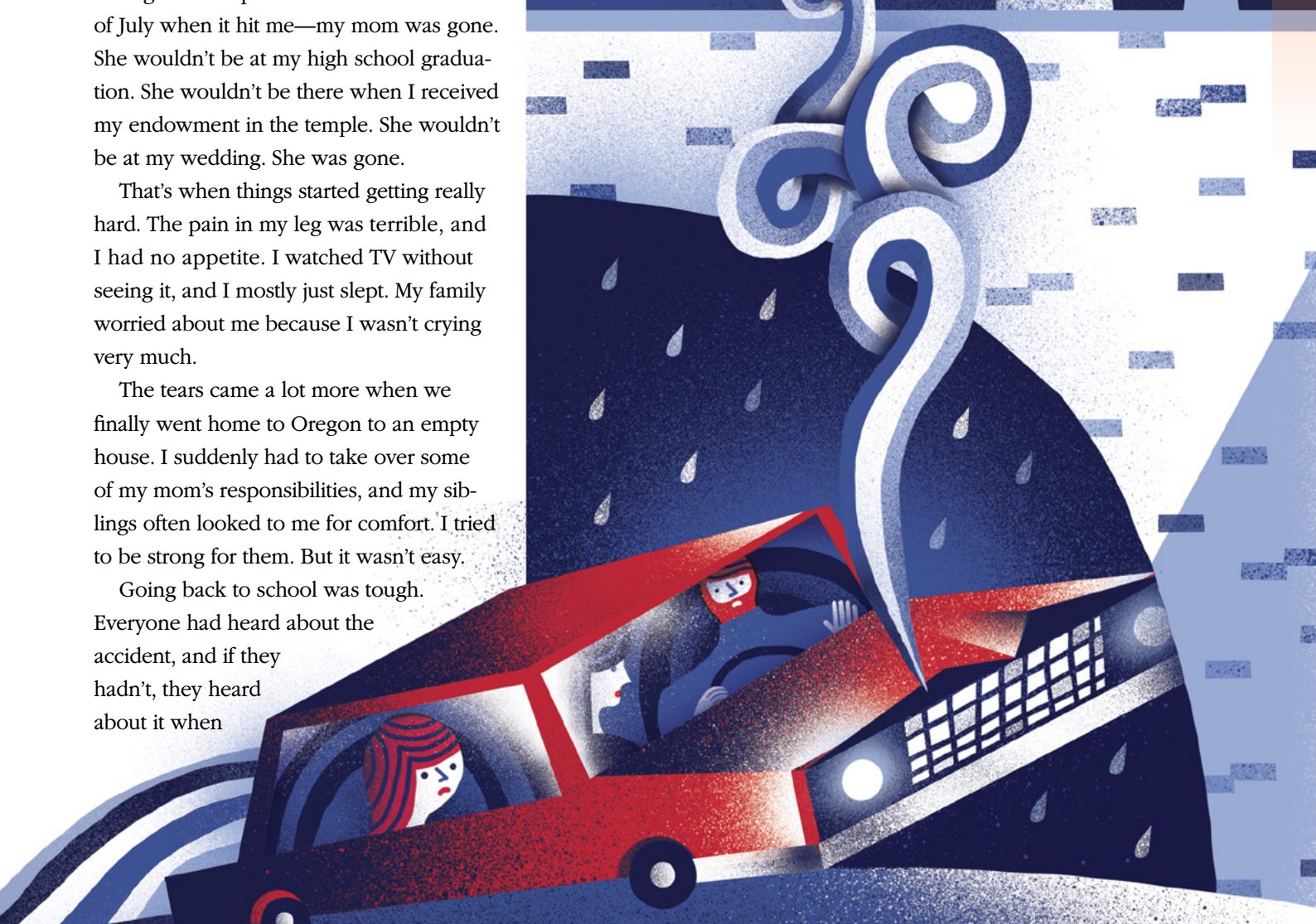
being strong for my younger siblings.

My initial feeling of peace stayed with me for another week and a half. I was sitting in a wheelchair watching fireworks through the hospital window on the Fourth of July when it hit me—my mom was gone. She wouldn't be at my high school graduation. She wouldn't be there when I received my endowment in the temple. She wouldn't be at my wedding. She was gone.

That's when things started getting really hard. The pain in my leg was terrible, and I had no appetite. I watched TV without seeing it, and I mostly just slept. My family worried about me because I wasn't crying very much.

The tears came a lot more when we finally went home to Oregon to an empty house. I suddenly had to take over some of my mom's responsibilities, and my siblings often looked to me for comfort. I tried to be strong for them. But it wasn't easy.

Going back to school was tough. Everyone had heard about the accident, and if they hadn't, they heard about it when



LIFT UP YOUR HEART

“You may feel that your life is in ruins. . . . You may be afraid, angry, grieving, or tortured by doubt. But just as the Good Shepherd finds His lost sheep, if you will only lift up your heart to the Savior of the world, He will find you.

“He will rescue you.

“He will lift you up and place you on His shoulders.

“He will carry you home.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “He Will Place You on His Shoulders and Carry You Home,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 104.

my teachers introduced me as the girl who was in the accident. I felt isolated.

It was especially hard when my dad remarried nine months after my mom died. I knew that my stepmom would be good for our family and that we needed her, but it was hard to adjust.

Not everything was dark during this time though. I felt a lot of love from my Father in Heaven, my family, and my Church leaders. What helped me heal and move forward after the accident was doing simple things that strengthened my faith. Every day I spent an hour before going to bed reading the scriptures, praying, and writing in my journal in my closet. In the privacy of my closet, I didn't have to be strong for my siblings. I could cry as much as I needed and pour out my heart to God. I told Him exactly what I was feeling and how much I missed my mom. I know He heard me because of the many tender mercies I felt. That closet space became sacred to me.

Doing those simple things helped me stay connected to God instead of pushing Him away and becoming bitter. I didn't see the accident as God hurting my family. I felt more power to be patient and submit to His will

and keep moving forward through my hard days. And there were some really *hard* days.

After my dad remarried, I wanted to set a good example for my siblings, and I definitely didn't want to have bad feelings toward my stepmom, so I continued to put my trust in God. One activity in my Personal Progress book focused on making my home life better by strengthening my relationship with a family member for two weeks. Basically the goal was to try to be Christlike and show love through actions. I decided to try it and serve my stepmom.

With our combined families, there were a lot of dishes. So that's where I started. As I served her over the next two weeks, I felt enabled to love my stepmom and be patient even though I wasn't necessarily happy about the situation. Simply focusing on serving her helped me get through hard times because I felt the Spirit with me.

I still don't understand everything about why the accident happened to my family, and there are still hard days. But like the pioneers, I have put my trust in God and been given the power to persevere. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

