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I Am Still Alive by Kate Alice Marshall

Parents influence children in several ways, how they act, how they speak, and how they treat others. Children tend to do best in stable households, where they know what to expect and feel safe. However, when brought up to a stressful situation that changes their safe havens then they start to become unstable. This happened in *I Am Still Alive* by Kate Alice Marshall because Jess was abandoned by her father at age four and lived with her mom. Until the car crash killed her mom and disabled her. The choices made by parents will always affect children as seen in the novel, from her father leaving, her mother's influence, and the reunion with her father.

At a young age, Jess remembers little of her father. The only memory she has was when he came to visit her for Christmas but that was the last time she saw him. The divorce between Jess's mom and dad affected her even though she was four years old. Without her father, Jess is left to learn from her mother what he was like, "mom never once said she loved him that I could remember. It was always, "I thought your father was so exciting," or "Your father wasn't quite like anyone I'd ever met'" (77). This caused Jess to believe that her father did not love them enough to stay and "will never understand why [he] left" (81). Choices such as these always have consequences whether it was good or bad. Someone is always going to be the one who has to deal with it, in this case, it is the whole family. Jess's father legally moved to Alaska but truly lives in Canada where no one could find him except a few people. Jess and her mom lived in Seattle where their lives were the best it could be. The separation of her parents has made Jess

become a stranger to her father. Jess had few friends before the car crash because she only really connected with her mother.

Jess's parents' names are rarely mentioned due to the pain it brings when remembered. Her mother was similar to Jess's dad because "she couldn't sit still, and he couldn't stay away from the wilderness. Both of them got pulled away from me. But Mom always came back. Not anymore" (138). Her mother was a pilot who would be gone most of the time but would always call to check up on Jess. From those short amounts of time, Jess became independent and only relied on herself to take care of what is needed. Although Jess and her mom have a good relationship, in the book it seems Jess spends more time with her friends than her mother. Either way, her mom has made choices that affected her to be more independent.

When Jess's father and her reunited the first time it did not go well. Her dad was excited to see her but Jess was not. This was the first time they saw each other after 12 years and they both are strangers to each other. Jess even started lying right away saying "[her mom and her] went to church all the time,' I said. It was a complete lie" in order to rebel against him. The choices that were made changed them and both realized how drastic it did. Her father chose to leave Jess and that made their relationship broken and have a lot of untrust from Jess. Although her father did not think about the consequences, "We're all a collection of our choices. Good choices, bad choices, choices that don't look one way or another when you're making them"(76).

If a parent's action and words do not agree with the rest of the family, then there will a lot of confusion and impact on the children. Jess has experienced poor choices from both her mom and dad, and that shaped her. Jess was left alone by her parents and she only truly wished to have a happy family similar to her best friend who has a loving family.