



## THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH

After an accident stole part of **Lindsey Roy**, she found ways to make herself whole.

My husband and I were vacationing on an Arkansas lake in August 2013; we'd spent most of one Saturday just hanging out. Around 5 p.m., my friends boated over to say hello. Everything that came next I've taped together from other people's vantage points. Because in my memory I'm in the water chatting, and then all of a sudden I'm under the boat staring up at the glossy white bottom, my legs being ravaged by the propeller.

Multiple moments happened in concert—the surge of the engine, the boat bouncing off the dock, the wake from another craft. What had been several feet away was, in milliseconds, suddenly not. I came up for air with blood billowing around my legs—the water had been so beautifully clear that you could see the rocks at the bottom—and knew something was very wrong. I recall having a divine will to not leave my kids, 2 and 4 at the time, without a mother. Then my friends and my husband helped me swim to shore. The last thing I remember from the hospital is giant scissors cutting off my swimsuit.

My left leg was amputated, and the outer part of my right leg looks like a shark took a bite of it. The first year was constant surgeries, being fitted for prosthetics, learning to walk again. Throughout, I couldn't stop obsessing over my "old life." For a while that winter, I was barely eating—my depression soon hollowed me out. I mourned stupid things, like flip-flops (I couldn't flex my toes to keep them on anymore). Some days I just lay in a blob and wept.

The way back wasn't a lightbulb moment but endless trial and error: therapy, support groups, watching TED Talks over and over. People showed up for me and sent words of encouragement; that meant everything when I was struggling to believe I had a future. Then I started a blog, where I recorded accomplishments as mundane as "I put my own hair in a ponytail" and goals like "walk to the mailbox." One night I noticed how tender my son was being with his stuffed animals and thought, *My kids might be more empathetic because of their front-row seat to my life.*

The metaphor that came to me, funnily enough, is that on my worst days, I was swimming—treading water, exhausted. And after about a year, I arrived at Acceptance Island, crawled up on the shore, breathing heavily, and lay down. Now I'm in the center, under the palm trees. Trauma doesn't inevitably end with resilience, though. There's a big chapter in the middle involving luck and circumstances and relentless work. A lot of people say to me, "I could never have handled that." But I'm not some unique breed; most of them probably could. As I came back to myself, I wasn't consciously trying to rebuild my spirit—I just kept moving forward.

**LINDSEY ROY** is chief marketing officer at Hallmark.