

It was walking on a tightrope.

Not a metaphorical tightrope. An actual tightrope.

It was desperately trying to keep my balance, knowing that the slightest slip would leave me tumbling down, down, down and I didn't know if I would ever get up again.

It was the feeling, constantly, that I was going to fall.

I always felt that I was going to fall.

In my dreams I was falling. In my waking life I was precarious, knowing deep down that I was only one move away from falling and destroying everything. I had never been balanced. I didn't know what balance was. I knew it wasn't balance when I spent three weeks in the dark, sweating in my own regrets and self-loathing. I knew it wasn't balance when I worked 16 hours a day, forgetting to eat or drink or even breathe as I strove to prove that I was worth something. I knew it wasn't balance when I tried to find the answers to my feelings through food, drink, drugs, anything that might fill the hole inside of me. But it didn't matter. Balance didn't matter because somehow, miraculously, against all the odds, I was still standing.

But not anymore.

I was on the edge. A tipping point. I could feel myself wobbling and I had wobbled before, but never quite so hard and never quite so dangerously. You can't live like this. You can pretend you can and sure, for a few years it's ok. You can convince yourself everything is fine. That this is normal. That this is how everyone lives.

But it isn't.

I had never been balanced. Not in my whole life. Not even as a child. I didn't know what balance was.

But she did.

She knew how to take a moment to breathe when it all felt too much. She knew how to say no to the demands of more, more, more work and spend the evening at the cinema instead. She knew how to eat three times a day, real food, not diet shakes and vitamin tablets. She knew how to laugh and love and actually live.

She knew how to balance. And she was willing to show me how to balance too.

I had never been balanced. I didn't know how much of life I was missing by never learning what balance was. *The tightrope is there for everyone*, she would tell me. *You have to learn to walk without being afraid to fall.*

It was walking on a tightrope.

But this time, she was holding my hand as I walked.