

One true thing

By [Melissa Earley](#)

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As we sat on my back patio listening to the crack of fireworks, sipping Fat Tire and eating peach pie, a friend told me the story of the February night he nearly drowned in Lake Michigan. He had jumped in to save his dog.

Good Samaritans were able to pull the dog to safety, but they had to leave my friend in the water while they went for help. He tried to pull himself onto the ice, but it broke beneath him. He couldn't climb the ten-foot retaining wall. With his fingertips he clung to a narrow gap in the concrete, only his head above water. He doesn't know how much time went by, but he lost his grip on the crevice when his hands froze with the palms flat. His head dipped again and again under the water. With each dunk, he could feel the heat whoosh off his head.

He thought three things: one, if this were how he died his ex would be totally vindicated. Two, his mother deserved better. Three, life, what the hell was that supposed to be? And then he thought that if these were the last moments of his life he should say something out loud that was absolutely true.

That's where he paused in his story and looked me in the eye and asked, "What would you have said?" My thoughts froze in the icy water. The only words that came to mind were "Help!" and "Fuck." I could not think of a single, absolutely true thing to say.

As we sat on my back patio, hearing the crack of fireworks, sipping Fat Tire, and eating peach pie I was so relieved that he there was to tell me this story. And so angry that he was such an idiot that he almost wasn't there.

He looked at me, waiting for an answer. I felt my hands sliding down the slick, icy concrete. Nothing. I shook my head.

"What did you say?" I asked. "There is only love," he responded. "Love in relationships is life-giving. Love in neighborhoods is community. Love in systems is justice." Until I have an answer of my own, I'll borrow his: "There is only love."

Originally posted at [Waking Up Earley](#)