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A Calamity

Another “x” on the family tree. Another loved one gone too soon. Another memory left to haunt my thoughts.

“Hello...yes, I’m Leah,” a tightening feeling in my throat began as the next few words spilled out, “her daughter.”

The words *accident* and *didn’t make it* lingered in Luke’s truck as the phone slipped from the grip of my hand. *This can’t be happening! It hasn’t even been a year since we lost dad.* Thoughts of the past ran frantic in my head as I stared at the blurring green of the passing trees without realizing Luke’s anxious dark brown eyes jumping back and forth from focusing on the road and me. I was lost in thought.

“Leah,” he turned to look at me “Leah,” then the truck jolted to halt throwing my body forward to only be restrained by the seat belt across my chest “Leah!” screeched Luke as his voice progressively grew louder with concern.

There isn’t a right way to inform someone-- especially Luke-- about the news given to me by a complete and utterly apathetic stranger. The truck came to halt on the side of the road as Luke no longer shifted his eyes between the road and me; instead the once comforting brown eyes turned into expressionless eyes that only focused on the longing darkness of the road ahead. *How do I tell Luke? What am I supposed to say?* Questions bounced around my head as reality crept back into my mind. I began to shift my body towards Luke hoping I could build up the nerve to speak.

“There was an accident...” the words slowly poured out of my mouth, “a driver swerved into mom’s lane...she didn’t make it.” My vision became blurry as tears began to form as the last four words escaped my lips.

Silence.

“Luke?” I whispered as my eyes captured the sight of his weary face. He didn’t make a sound nor any movements-- I questioned whether he was even breathing. He was simply staring off into the distance as if waiting for something to occur-- as if frozen in time.

“What do we do? What is going to happen to us-- to me?” the palms of my hands slid back and forth as a feeling of yearning for answers filled me. No response. *I don’t know what to do. I don’t want to believe any of this-- I don’t.*

Days of silence followed as the funeral approached, leaving me to come face to face with the realism of a parentless life. *Why did this happen to me? Why did you have to go? I wasn't ready to be on my own.* I thought to myself as my body faced towards the midnight black casket that is now home to the remains of someone I called mom. The creak of a floor board echoed throughout the empty church as Luke wandered up past the bare rows of pews where the people who loved and admired my mom said their final goodbyes.

“Leah.” He stops in his tracks and gently places his hand on my stiff shoulder, “It’s time to go.” The sound of his serene voice brought me back from the endless thoughts. Those were the first exchange of words between the two of us since the night I received the phone call. It had been five days without conversations, five days without breaking down into tears, and five days without grieving.

“But...” I fidgeted with each finger as if it were a nervous habit. “I’m don’t-- I can’t-- say goodbye.” I could feel it; I could feel my eyes begin to water and the pain of not wanting to let go were stuck in my throat.

“You don’t-- it’s not a goodbye” His arms wrapped around me as he slid into the pew to sit down. “It’s time to go now. We’ve got each other to look after.” The moment of content had disappeared as Luke calmly rose from the pew and then looked in my direction for something-- maybe a sign of understanding from me.

“Okay.” The one word was all I could manage to say; if I were to say anymore, I don’t think I could keep myself together. *It’s just me and Luke. We can get through this, right? I can’t, but I have to. I have to do it for Luke, but for me also.* The conversations that occupied my mind-- my thoughts-- were the only form of communication I could handle.

Okay was the last word to come out of my mouth before the day where every feeling, every thought, and every memory came rushing out--my nervous breakdown or so the name professionals call it.