

She looked at me, straight in the eyes. She had grown frail from all the days that had been spent in the hospital. Resting in that oversized hospital gown. Her hair, that was once lustrously brunette and dense, had shrivelled and turned greasy about with several knots. Her eyes had sunken in and her cheeks seemed devoid of any nourishment.

She held my hand. It was cold, trembling, but ever so soft. She was weak, but she held on to my hand with every last drop of her strength in her body. She was holding my hand firmly as a sign of confidence in what she was going to say.

"I love you, Oris, I-I love you so much it hurts. I never told you because I was scared, but.....I love you."

I stood there, holding her hand in mine, stunned. It felt like someone kicked the air out of my lungs. I almost forgot how to breathe. My heart was beating faster, louder. I could feel the weight of my body on my knees.

They rolled her inside on the gurney, several nurses surrounding her. They entered the operating room, and the red sign on top started glowing.

I stood there in the hallway, several people walking up and down the corridors, noise from several conversations beaming through and crowding my ears. The world seemed to move slowly. I could feel the chill from the air conditioning, and the ghastly smell of the disinfectant. Life around me continued to exist, and I turned into a spectre.

I walked to the side and sat down on one of the metal benches. I could feel the cool of the metal backrest through my shirt, and my legs seemed relieved to be relaxed. My left arm on the arm rest and the right arm just by my side, I sat there, motionless. I stared at the floor, a small little speck, a burnt brown color, near my left foot. Oh how insignificant it was to the rest of the world, and yet there I was, the only one who noticed.

I needed to call her parents.

I was in autopilot from then on. I pulled out my phone and tried to call her parents. There was no cell reception. I walked back through the corridor and the lobby and headed outside to call them.

I couldn't hear anything they said, I just said what needed to be said. I could hear their frantic noises from the other side but I couldn't discern what was being said. I hunged up and went back inside.

I walked back to the corridor in front of the operating room and sat down in the very same seat. My mind was blank.

She said she loved me.

Cira, as I liked to call her, had been my friend for a long time. I always had a crush on her however. I was in love with how she was always joyful, always so flamboyant. Almost always acting ridiculously. She was kind to everyone around her. She had the ferocity of a summer sun coupled with the gentleness of a falling feather that made it impossible to not like her. I had met her in the first year of high school. She noticed me from out of the entire class, sitting all alone and struck a conversation with me. She made a lot of effort to get to know me, and I hold her responsible for most of the happiest days of my high school.

We had moved on to college, yet we never stopped meeting. We never grew apart. In fact we grew closer. One meet-up provided fuel for the next, and so on.

I realised very late that I had a crush on her. It made me more aware of myself and I grew terribly scared. What if I let her know that i really had a crush on her? What if she got scared? It would end up ruining this near perfect thing that we had attained.

Nothing, however, could've made me foresee this moment. And even though I learned that she had similar feelings for me, all that it did was leave me to despair. I could have never felt any hollower than I was feeling right now. It seemed like an influx of emotions, a congregation of feelings both sweet and bitter. My mind was cluttered with thoughts, voices and whispers, and at the same all I could think of was nothing. My time had stopped right where she left my hand.

I could never let her know that she had her feelings reciprocated. I couldn't let her know that I was there, for her, and that I loved her too, more than my heart could bear. All she got was my stunned face, and my absence of words.

I felt a presence next to me.

It was a man, in his late sixties, with salt and pepper hair, combed back. He was clean shaved. His eyes were sunken into their cavities and it seemed like he hadn't slept in a while. He wore a red-checkered shirt and a doctor's coat. His name was on the breast-pocket of the coat: Dr.Orms.

"Hello there." he called out.

"Hello doctor." I replied.

"Are you related to the young lady who was just rolled in?" he asked.

"I'm...." i stopped, what was I? "...a friend" I finished.

"Ah."

There was nothing for a while, just the humdrum of the hospital in the background, machine noises, and announcements on the overhead speaker systems. The cold air when breathed in made my throat irritated. It felt like it was dehydrated.

"Are you worried?" he finally spoke.

"About?" I asked most suddenly.

"Her."

Was I? What was I feeling? I couldn't tell. My heart had screeched to a halting stop. Nothing made sense anymore. My heart seemed to put on a defense mechanism where it stopped feeling anything. My brain was in full control now. And it was telling me to stop trying to feel anything.

"Yes." I replied.

"Why?" he asked most solemnly.

"Because...."and I trailed off.

As soon as I uttered the word, it seemed like my brain was unable to hold back one feeling: Guilt.

What if I had told her sooner? Would this had never happened? Would me telling her those simple words have altered the very course of history? Would fate have smiled down on us and blessed us? Would the very heavens have celebrated this union?

Was it meant to be? Was it meant to be like this?

"Because I couldn't tell her how I felt." I said finally.

"And why would that matter?"

"Because she confessed to me...because...those were maybe her last few words." The image of her holding my hand came back into my mind.

There was silence. This time, complete silence. There was a ringing in my ear that blocked out every sound in existence except for the beating of my own heart. And it was beating fast. And it hurt.

The doctor next to me sighed.

"I believe that you have no reason to feel the way you're feeling."

"Why?" I demanded.

"She was probably happy." He said.

"What?"

"She was happy my child."

I looked at him. He had this expression on his face that radiated coldness, a numb feeling, yet it seemed like there was warmth behind this facade of a face that the years and old age had made him succumb to.

Happy?

"My child do not confuse your feelings to hers. She doesn't feel the same as you do." he said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"She doesn't feel guilt, or remorse, or regret, or anxiety. She had been gifted with the chance to tell you what was in her heart, what she had been keeping with her all these days. She didn't ask you to bear the responsibility of an answer, she just explained herself. She said she loved you, my child, you do no justice to her feelings by feeling guilty. Right in that moment that you so regret now, she was the single most happiest being on the planet. You were the reason her days were joyful, the reason why the sun shone brighter. You were the reason her heart was filled to the brim with excitement. You were the reason she stayed awake at night, why even the darkest of rooms were filled with light. You were the reason she would look so forward to the next day, why she would spring with every step eager to step again, hoping that with every step, every second, she grew closer to you. You were the reason why her dreams have been peaceful, why her soul a shade so loveable. You were the reason she was happy, my child. *You* were her happiness. And she let you know."

I sat there, listening. He took a deep breath.

"A confession of love at death's door is one of the purest forms of expression to ever grace the world. No anxiety, no hoping for a positive answer, no waiting. The true purity and joy that comes from being able to flat out express one-self can never compare to anything else."

"Don't be guilty my child, you, being there, not replying might have been the most blissful thing you could've done. You gave her an outlet to express herself. *You gave her a chance to love you.*"

I sat there, the cold of the chair seeping in through my shirt. I looked to my right to tell the doctor something, but he wasn't there anymore. How much time had passed since he had spoken, i don't remember. It all was just a muddle of memories, of noises, of smells.

The speck was gone. I could no longer see it at my feet.

The doctor walked out of the operating room. His solemn voice told me everything i needed to know.

I saw her parents running towards us. They heard what the doctor had to say.

I wasn't around to experience their reaction. I didn't want to.

I walked back to the cabin where she was staying. It was dusk. The sky had turned a rich shade of orange and yellow, and it splashed colors all over the room. The bed was unmade. There was a bottle half over the edge on the bedside table. I walked over to the bed and laid down on it.

I felt something underneath the pillow on the left end. I reached out and pulled out a teddy bear. It was brown and its eyes were deep and dark. It was a gift I had given her on her birthday in the very same year we had met.

She had kept it all these years.

The teddy had her distinct smell, I couldn't tell why. It smelled of lilac.

I remembered of the time we had gone flower viewing. We sat there, under a tree overlooking the field of flowers. Red, yellow, blue, white, pink. It almost seemed artificial, unreal. It was spring, and there was a pleasant wind blowing. Once all the talking material was exhausted we sat there, without a word. She then placed her head on my shoulder, and we were like that for a while. I remember it distinctly.

I held that teddy tight in my arms and looked out the window at the setting sun.

Ah, there she goes, I thought to myself.

I made her happy.

The sky grew a shade of pink and blue as the last remnants of the sun tried to furtively fight against the descending dark.

I made her happy, and she loved me.

The room grew a mix of all shades, white, dark, pink, purple, as the tears started to form in my eyes.

I made her happy, and she loved me.

And I loved her.

