

Chapter 12 Wish You Were Here

We left the shields there lined up, we all wrote something on them. On the big shield we drew fireworks and made it back home in one piece. None of us told anyone outside of our group anything. Everyone got home safe...but not the same. Copper went with The Kids back to Los Angeles, he was holding hands with Emily. I am more than sure he kissed her long and good. He always talked about her hair and she even wore his jacket on the train...she loved trains.

Lawrence and Z crashed together and got drunk at twelve oclock. I thanked them and left them, with Grace. We saw Jake and his brothers, he nodded at me and I crossed

the street and shook his hand. I said, Thank you Jake, your brothers too...thank you. By the way, sorry for tackling you all those months ago and going at it on the floor with you. He laughed and replied with, No problem...by the way, thats all good now. No bad blood at all. I nodded and replied with, I hope we don't fight no more Jake, were getting too old for that stuff now. He said, Eh...I wouldnt say old but...if you say so.

I fist pumped him and walked down the street at night with Grace and she said with a giggle, I never realized how short you were compared to Jake and Lawrence. I stared at her and stood quiet, half offended and half laughing on the inside. I hugged her and kissed her head and we got to my friends house, Davian. He was a cool dude, I met him in East Los Angeles but he moved out to the suburbs. He had dark really cool wavy hair and was sort of short but man he was way stronger than youd ever expect. He was on one and a bunch of people were passed out at his party, I didnt realize it was January first.

He walked up and gave Grace and I hugs and offered drinks or a smoke and we declined and I just spoke to him, hearing an old friend's voice was amazing right about now. Grace enjoyed the conversation and ate an apple. I see now why she has abs...can't relate not entirely at least. Davian was up in the clouds and was speaking about the universe and the new year, we had told him eventually that we didnt do much for new years. He grabbed a sparkler and beer and shook it and started re celebrating as if the clock just turned twelve for new years and demanded

Grace and I kiss...so we did. After ten minutes he was out like a baby, but he would never know how much I really liked his conversation and needed it.

Me and Grace walked to a Hilton and they surprisingly had a room open and we slept like babies ourselves after our first session of the new year, something about her and what she had...I was never going to get tired of that thing man...but more importantly I was never going to get tired of her. I could only hope she felt the same and feels the same after many many years.because I know I would. I really love Grace. It was four in the morning and we crashed. I was asleep and exhausted, I was happy Grace held one of my hands across her chest along with her hair in my face.

I woke up to Grace watching t.v. and still in bed under the blankets, it was 2 in the afternoon. I kissed her cheek and went to the restroom and brushed my teeth and wet my hair and shaved, I had almost a beard and...at just eighteen that wasnt the look I wanted to give off. Graces haircut wasnt terrible and still stood relatively short enough but, my waves and curls were still there and my sides didnt bug me, so I couldnt complain. My hair got darker and thicker. It was all black now and thick...but not oily, Graces hair was darker itself but still blonde. We both for some reason lost more weight, the bruises on my face were just outlined and I stopped waking up sore and could walk normally again.

I heard a knock on the door and looked straight up at the mirror and panicked and grabbed the pair of scissors at the hotel. I rushed out of the bathroom and Grace walked through the hall and said, Woah...calm the hell down I ordered the lunch room service. I stopped and looked through the doors eye window, I saw a man with a chef hat holding a tray with wheels . I let out a bunch of breaths to calm down. Grace was wearing just her underwear and my shirt from the night before with her messed up hair, her feet were also bare. I said, Put something on your legs...don't want the room service guy staring. Not today I don't want to fight anyone any time soon. She laughed and grabbed my jeans which were too big and just slid them on without even buttoning them up and opened the door.

She smiled and the chef person opened the trays, he said Afternoon maam, so you ordered, the california rolls, two sprites, steamed rice, a right ounce steak, with garlic and caramelized onions. With a bucket of ice along with a bucket of

neapolitan ice cream...correct? Grace replied with Sure...I think so, that sounds bomb. I didnt realize Grace has probably never ordered room service or stood in a hotel like this, in my younger years I have even stayed in penthouses in Las Vegas. The chef stared at her, Grace realized she was messing up and looked at me for help and I, in my underwear and a muscle shirt and starving with scissors in my hand walked to Grace and the chef and said, The room? He replied with, B, number fifty two, third floor sir.

I said, Yeah, thats us. Can I have the receipt please? I stretched my hand out and he handed it to me and I scanned the cart and read the receipt, he had it all there and grabbed my wallet and paid for it with a twenty dollar tip. Grace excitedly rolled the cart in and we ate til we couldnt. I love the way we started the new year, I wouldn't want it another way honestly. I was happy, I was...really happy. She was one of the very few girls I have ever seen that looks good while having a mouthful of two california rolls and sprite and soy sauce.

Eventually, we checked out and were still living out of a duffle bag. We went to our homes, she saw her brother again and her mom and dad werent home. I went to my home then saw both of my brothers and my ma. She was mad but...I had a secret to tell her which made her cry but happy at the same time. My brothers both even at younger ages were happy now. Grace eventually came over and met my baby brother, which was nice, really nice actually.

My mom annoyingly said, This isnt the girl you went out with earlier. Grace replied with eyes that burnt and saw through my soul. Thankfully my brother saved me and I even came forth, it was an old date and Grace understood. Thank God. My baby brother stared at Grace at just four years old. He wouldn't stop staring and had real red cheeks. I am pretty sure he wanted to steal her from me if he could. He whispered in my ear, Can we go get candies...I want to get her a wowwipop.

So we went and got Grace a lollipop, he wanted Mamp;Ms. I was scared, the idea of Grace and my mom in the same room for over a minute...not the best idea in the world. I got myself an Arizona with some chips and Grace a bag of jerky, she also was the only girl I knew who willingly liked it. By the time we got back Grace had red cheeks and a small cut on her lip. I realized she was dying to leave,

she was biting her lip so often that it cut. When my brother opened the door, she stared right at me with her eyebrows going down in an angry look until my brother ran to her with her candy.

She smiled at him and took it from his hands and opened it and began eating it and he stared happily. My ma looked at me, she was also annoyed, I could feel the tension and got the hint. I said, Alright Ma, I have a surprise for Grace so...we have to go. We then said our goodbyes, my brother got a solid kiss from Grace on the cheek and he wasn't going to wash that cheek for a while I could tell. We hugged and walked out the door, as we walked down the stairs Grace said, So...I wasn't aware that you had a surprise for me.

I replied with, First...we got to go back to East Los Angeles and then we go to the surprise I have for you, okay? Grace said alright then, Hey...by the way, me and your ma aren't the best of friends already. I figured and didn't have much to say, so I said nothing and she understood. We had to ride just my bike to Los Angeles, we rode to the apartments first. Got there under an hour too...this bike wasn't vintage but it was faster, a lot faster.

First I hugged The Auk who now had a nice home running in the front of the apartments which looked pretty nice. I had to thank him for caring and choosing to stay and help when I needed him and no questions asked, I decided I would tell him about everything. He was in a whole and awe. He was worried and asked if they would be back, my answer was simply I ain't sure. It was a pretty calm place after that and eventually we left by early sundown. Next, I parked the bike on Whittier in front of the WSS. By now the cruising had started, believe it or not, living in East L.A. as long as I did, I never saw the cruising up close. We walked to each kid's house individually and thanked each of them, to which just about all of them cried. I realized these kids were sent into a warzone, but for me...they did it and for that, I was forever grateful.

Eventually we hit each kid's house and Grace was growing impatient but before we left, I saw an old friend. Brooke was walking with her friends, she waived hi and was wearing an all black Adidas outfit. She smiled and that smile could shine through the clouds if she wanted it to. I remembered when she was the only person I knew here, she was the first person I met when I first came to East LA. I don't have

a ton of memories with Brooke, but even on my dying days, that smile could still shine bright enough to give me a few more seconds of breath. I'd be leaving soon, to show Grace her surprise. I have my friends here and everything, if something ever went wrong...I think Brookes smile would shine the way back believe it or not. She was a very good friend and was human and thats what I admire most about her. She continued walking but, I know we have stories we can share smiling. I do hope I will see her again but...until then.

Across the street, through the lowriders along with the men and women in them. Stood Delilah at 5'3, now even taller in high heels and her tight clothes. In front of the Nike store, in a sundress and full face of makeup that she didn't need on. She didn't have to try hard to show off, she really didn't need the dress like that either. Her eyes were intense and had seen a lot. She wasn't fazed by any of it and if she was, she would never show it to anyone. I didn't know her all that well, she was the first girl I had ever seen in a Garfield classroom. She matched the colors, red, blue, green and orange with a lot of black surrounding her. She owned them all with pride. As I left I questioned if I'd ever see her again, I wish I got to know her better. I never did. I did wish her the best as I started the bike and began to ride away with Grace.

We rode through the lowriders and hopped on the freeway and passed Los Angeles entirely and then within under a half hour, the hometown. The moon followed, soon after the cold did too. After a long hour and half, we got off the freeway and I needed to put gas. We got off and Grace said, Why the hell are we back here? Its the same place after you had that incident. Did you start something again and I just didnt see?! She kept asking questions which I declined all of them and I didnt lie once.

Then we rode again. The streets were wet and you could smell dirt and rain that just left. I entered the old neighborhood that I once lived in, also the same one Grace and I walked into earlier. She was scared and told me to be quiet but...there was no need. We drove down a long turning left, took one right and on the second house from the corner, the same house we slept in was there but...now refurbished. Grace said, Why are we here Gold? I am cold and were far from home and someone lives here now. I turned around with a smile and tossed her a key. Yeah...you live here now Grace. I replied

She caught the keys and froze while doing so. After about thirty seconds she replied with, What? She walked to me and dropped the duffle bag, put her arms on my shoulders then repeated it again, What? I grabbed one hand and walked up the driveway to the door. I put her hand with the keys to the door. She put the keys in the lock on the door and had watery eyes and a smile and opened it. It was dark and I flipped the light switch on behind her. The light showed a table to our right which was the dining room, upstairs about fifteen to twenty feet tall with matte white walls. The tile beneath us was white and squared and to our right was a mudroom and the garage. She walked into the other room with a kitchen to her right and living room to our left, about thirty feet long of space. The kitchen had granite countertops, two ovens one on top of the other, a few feet away from that was the stove. It had eight burners and the sink was really big and stainless steel. There was a granite island too, with stools, four of them.

Along all of this, the living room was a solid, ten to fifteen steps away. The living room had a t.v. that was at the least, sixty to eighty inches. It was huge. There was a huge sectional couch and a ottoman in the middle. The carpet was beige and the couch was brown and suede. There was a closet underneath the stairs, next to the living room was a bathroom. Next to the bathroom there was an empty bedroom for a guest I guess. We had already seen the upstairs, except my room had a new bed and a dresser and cubicle already. We had seven bedrooms in the house, and the upstairs loft had a conversation pit.

Next up, we Grace ran from her room and tackled me into the pit that was so soft, it smelled so good. She layed on top and asked, We made a ton of money...but how did you do this? I smiled, I couldnt help it and answered her question with, I technically didnt. Since we won the fight...that jerk of an agent we met in San Francisco offered a gift, this is what I wanted. Best part is...you havent even checked the garage. She got off, flew down the stairs, I won't lie, I was way slower then her. She saw it finally, her new motorcycle. Also with a matching car. She had her brothers old BMW bike and a new BMW to match it. Both were colored black and white with blue.

Next to those was a gym, a squat rack, a bench and weights with a treadmill. I planned on using them all. The backyard had grass, a field goal post and a half court basketball hoop. We were going to be really happy here. We walked back

up the stairs just imagining all the parties we would throw, breakfast we would make, the dinners and movie nights. So many things to look forward to..I kind of felt, we deserved this. I could even give my friends a few things back to them for thanks, even though I am not someone to give gifts as return as thanks. I saw it as a start and...was thankful I was able to keep Grace. She stuck around through way too much, rides through cold weather, gross dusty motel rooms, firefights, holidays, hunger, bar fights, me being dead for two days...you name, Grace didnt go anywhere.

I wanted to tell everyone that she was my only one at the top of my lungs but I was whispering because I don't want to jinx it. She didnt sleep in her bed due to her saying, I got used to sleeping with you so...scoot over. I was almost asleep by four and I thought she was too so I told her, I have my eyes closed right now..and I am hoping you will stay, not for the things we have or memories we made but for...me. I fear we will grow apart...I know people grow and change and that has to be okay but...I don't want a world without you and I would die if you ever went where I couldnt follow...so I ask here in this bed...please once again, don't go where I can't follow.

To that, I decided I couldnt sleep and sat in the window seal. Not for very long and eventually I fell to sleep right next to her...as happy as a guy ever could be. I honestly couldnt wait to wake up just to see Grace enjoy everything all over.

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I woke up at ten in the morning, Grace wasnt next to me. As a matter of fact, I was alone...in the queen size bed with white and grey sheets and blankets. I sat up and heard rain outside. I could see grey skies outside through the blue arrowed and white curtains. The air around me was cold, being in underwear and a muscle shirt wasnt the wisest decision for clothing. I got out of bed and brushed my teeth, showered too. I was quiet...I wanted to hear Grace or something from her but...to my luck, I heard nothing.

I put on some sweat, they were black and hugged my ankles. Then I found a long sleeve shirt a size too big but no complaints and I rolled the sleeves up a bit then threw some black ankle socks. I then walked out of the room and closed the door behind me...the pit had nobody in there, I checked the other rooms, bathrooms

then eventually led up to Graces room...to no luck. Still no Grace, although she did leave one of her dressers open. I walked downstairs, it was colder down there then upstairs, you could still hear the rain though. I went through everything downstairs, yet still no Grace. I had to take a second to myself...her car and bike were still here...she didnt take anything...why would she leave? After about a half hour I lost my patience and started yelling and walking fast around the house and looking for Grace.

I went to her room, everywhere...I sat on her bed and felt an odd thump. I looked around and the room was quiet, nothing happened. I sat once again, the thump came...I wasnt that heavy. I was confused, so I got off and felt the bed lift with me. The bed lifted three or four feet off the ground and there was a staircase with lights going down. It was like a secret passage in the movies. I went down it, very cautiously. I ended up fifteen feet down and opened a door, inside was a bunker looking room then I saw her, Grace. She was reading a book then looked up at me and said, Oh, good morning. I yelled at her and said, WHY DIDNT YOU TELL ME THERE WAS A WHOLE SECRET ROOM???

She laughed and said, Sorry, I just got into this book. Its called The Great Gatsby...its pretty nice. I am going to read Gone With The Wind next...but I am sorry. She hugged me with the book still in her hand and we left the bunker room. We made cookies, she wanted the crunchy ones. I prefer when the cookies are easy to bite into. I made canela and coffee then drank both...she just drank coffee. After watching a movie I realized something. Grace...I didnt get you anything for Christmas did I? She got off me then put her coffee down and with a cookie followed by, You got me a house...thats a gift...I didnt get you anything but...be right back. She ran up the stairs, I think she even fell once while up stairs and I threw on christmas music. She came down with a surprisingly fast wrapped gift, but Grace is a master wrapper so no questions asked. I opened it, it was a skateboard. She said, The agent left it in the bunker thing...it goes over thirty miles per hour and they made it to have a remote and everything...the wonders our nation can do huh?

I hugged her tight and loved the board...I kinda considered the shoes she bought me a gift but I guess she didnt. We made dinner, sang music that the neighbors down the block could hear and we werent even close to making a sound next to it. We slow danced, I wasnt that great. She sang and claimed she would break my

heart...maybe later but...not tonight due to her singing. She did sing well though. Eventually, we got back to the roof and continued the dance. Still nobody fell off the roof, we eventually went back to bed. The clouds were gone and we eventually rolled back into bed.

She listened...she really didnt go where I couldnt follow...I couldnt thank her enough. I was always looking over my shoulder but...she always repeated, That was then...this