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Whispers Before The Storm

Hi, I'm Luna. I'm twenty-three years old, somewhere between being young and taking on adult responsibilities, finishing my master's in health informatics. Early last year, I was running at full speed. The summer was a mix of long days and short nights, stretched thin between my internship at a brain-computer interface company, two accelerated summer courses, and a bunch of research projects. My life felt like a puzzle dumped across a table with every piece demanding to be fitted in place.

By August, the frantic motion slowed. My internship wrapped up, my courses reached their end, and suddenly there was quiet, a silence that pressed against my skin. I would wake up tense and then quickly feel my body relax, but beneath this there was a small ache. A whisper from my body, almost dismissible. The pain had a faint resemblance of period cramps, ten percent of what I knew so well, so faint I laughed at myself for noticing. I ignored it, tucking it away like a receipt in a drawer. I had my life back again. I took bike rides, had long coffees with friends, cooked large meals I didn't have time for before. The ache slipped in and out of my mornings, so subtle it was like a background hum of a refrigerator, you don't notice until it's gone, or until it grows louder.

Then September came, and with it, the semester. Life quickened again. I was running on adrenaline and caffeine, running between classes, labs, and my part-time shifts. The ache stayed, creeping forward slowly and too gradual to sound alarm. Until one Friday. A twelve-hour shift packed with meetings with people much smarter than me but also more boring, time dripping like paint drying, the ache erupted. It was no longer a whisper but a scream, like a gun shot me from the inside. The pain seized me so sharply I felt my knees wobble, but I clenched my jaw, white-knuckled through the last hour, refusing to yield. When the shift ended, I staggered out to meet my boyfriend's car. I slid into the seat and whispered, "Something's wrong."

As we entered the ER, the lights were cold and unkind, buzzing above us like a bee hive. Nurses moved like professional dancers, guiding me through hallways that smelled faintly of antiseptic and something metallic. After taking vitals, meeting with the doctor for him to order an x-ray, the doctor finally stood before me again, his face grave yet softened at the edges, he told me words that cracked my world open... ectopic pregnancy. That means a fertilized egg had implanted in my fallopian tube instead of my uterus. As it grew, it caused the tube to stretch and finally rupture, spilling blood into my abdomen. My body had been a battlefield and I hadn't known. He said it was a miracle I was still awake after pushing through hours of pain, finishing my shift as if endurance could stitch me back together.

After hearing those words, my focus shifted to the man who had delivered them. This doctor, too considerate for a man working in gynecology, never entered the room without a woman at his side. A silent gesture, but one that anchored me, made me feel less like a subject and more like a person. The nurses wrapped me in warm blankets, tucked hydration into my veins, their kindness wrapping around

me like a plush blanket. And then came surgery. Darkness swallowed me in an instant, and when I woke, I was in a room meant for beginnings, not losses... the baby delivery unit. I lay in a bed made for new mothers, soft and welcoming, yet depressing in its irony. My boyfriend sat by my side, his hand stuck to mine, his eyes swollen with fatigue and fear. In that moment, his presence was a buoy in stormwater, the only thing keeping me afloat.

Recovery was long and difficult. My body ached, stitched and weak. I was bedridden for weeks, the walls of my room shrinking closer each day, my eyes were glued to my phone. Productivity, once my compass, gone. My research sat untouched, my ambitions paused. My relationship strained under the weight of my condition, but without him, I would have drowned. The slow return of my strength felt more like learning to live in ruins or planting flowers in dry soil.

Now, I realize the body is not a machine you can will past its breaking point. It speaks in whispers before it screams. When I think back on that summer I hear those whispers. And I can't help but wonder what might have been if I had listened sooner.