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Audio Narrative

Sugary Silence

Twelve dozen cupcakes. That's a hundred and forty-four individual goodies baked completely from scratch. It was the night before the bake sale, and the dining room table where my family of 6 usually ate was completely covered in cupcakes. Each one had a delicate swirl of frosting. Each one had a sugary pink ribbon folded on top. Each one was made while thinking of Diane. I had been baking for practically all of the first 48 hours of March, but the planning for my explosion of pink had been brewing since early January...

Chirp "hey"

It was my phone. It always went off almost every 5 minutes without fail. It was the same text it always was, "hey, what's up, how was your day?" For the four years since he moved, my best friend and I have had these conversations almost too often. Every day we would recap any important events, share insignificant details, and text just for the sake of being connected. You do what you can when your best friend is a thousand miles away. *Chirp* "Not good" It was another text from him, letting me know his day hadn't gone well. I wasn't too surprised, because he had been home sick with the flu the day before, so I texted him back. *Chirp* It's not the flu. *Chirp.* My mom has breast cancer.

At that moment, a thousand miles never seemed so far away. Over the years, his mom, Diane, had become like a second mother to me, and his sister and dad completed my long distance family. A hole filled my chest as I thought of my loved ones having to deal with so much pain. With shaking hands and tears streaming down my face, I wanted to text him back and tell him everything was going to be okay, but you can never guarantee anything with cancer. Instead, I asked if there was anything I could do. **chirp.* Nothing.

That's what his responses became. I grew to accept it. He was just never going to be okay, but it didn't stop me from asking if he was. **Chirp* I'm fine. He didn't want me to ask any questions. He didn't want to answer any questions. He didn't want to give updates on how his mom was doing. He didn't want me to comfort him. He didn't want me to acknowledge that his mom was sick. Eventually, he didn't want to talk at all. So he didn't. After begging him for some direction, some way to help, he just told me to occupy myself with my favorite pastime other than texting him. **chirp*. Go bake. Little did he know, that is exactly what I had been planning to do all along. After that I stopped getting responses. No more chirps.

My second family was battling cancer and my best friend wasn't communicating. The only comfort I had in the whole struggle was that I had the bake sale. I was the president of the Teens

Against Cancer Club at my school, and I had the power and support to switch our focus to breast cancer. Because of the club, my existence was dedicated to organizing our schools most memorable and pinkest bake sale ever. That was the plan. Bake pink cupcakes, raise some money, and try to feel like I was doing something. It was the perfect combination. I had always been a passionate baker and now I could take my passion for sugar and turn it around to show a family how deeply I cared.

I wanted to tell him and his mom, but I felt like I couldn't. I wanted them to know that I was thinking of Diane constantly. I wanted her to know that I would check her Facebook wall daily to see if she had posted any new updates. I wanted to tell her how I thought she was the strongest woman I had ever met, and how strong I knew he was being by standing at her side through it all. I wanted to hug his sister, and crack jokes with his dad just to see him smile. But I didn't tell them. Whenever I began to type out the text to tell my best friend all about my sugary plans, my fingers stopped. I was worried he would think I was being naive, thinking that my little bake sale could even be considered help to him and his family. He was a thousand miles away from me, watching his mom suffer through surgery, recovery, infections, chemo, complications, hospital visits, all while still trying to take care of her family. All I was doing was baking cupcakes. So I didn't tell them. I showed them.

The album was uploaded as soon as I had gotten home from school after the bake sale. Endless pictures of pink were put on Facebook: pictures of pink balloons, pink cupcakes, pink streamers, pink towers, students and teachers in pink, pink brownies, pink cookies, pink lemonade, and of course pink cupcakes. I knew it wasn't the same as fighting cancer, but I needed to send a message that I cared.

After finishing the upload, my body refused to move. Sinking deep into my pillows, I closed my eyes to catch up on the rest I felt like I had needed for weeks. A few hours later, I woke up to countless notifications on Facebook: congratulations for the bake sale, wall posts from friends, and comments on the album. I only cared about two. "Diane Francis likes your album." And a comment from his dad that read "inspirational." They had seen it. Two out of the family wasn't too bad, but the hole returned to my chest as I thought about the family member I hadn't heard from.

The rest of my evening continued as any school night would. I caught up on homework, watched a little TV, and tried to switch myself back into my normal routine. My shoulders relaxed, my eyes drooped, my feet had stopped aching, and my head had stopped spinning. For the first time I was almost completely content. Almost.

And then I heard the first chirp in two months: *Chirp* "Hey"