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# THE 90 DAYS

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**JUNE 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

It is about the end of spring now. I am sitting here on this hospital bed, it smells like disinfectant, it gives me headaches; the doctors, my dad and my grandmother are all watching over me. However, she is not here. I close my eyes for a moment, then open them again, hoping to see her standing there. However, after all that has happened these past 90 days, it is foolish of me to want that.

Oh, I did not introduce myself.

Well, I am Neo lynch.

I am 17 years old and just finished my high school studies, not that it matters anymore.

Recently, in between my exams, my mother died on March 15th, so I was not able to properly grieve because I thought my mother wouldn't want me ruining my exams because of her death. Nonetheless, all of that was for nothing, as on March 30th I received my blood test results from the hospital, stating that I had 3rd stage blood cancer and that I had 81 days left to live from then.

I have a kid brother, his name is Neil, he is 13 years old. I feel sorry for him as from tomorrow he will have to take the responsibilities that once I claimed and accepted as mine. I did all I could to keep him off this shitty world but it seems things always do not go the way we want. He will have to take care of my grandmother and father too. My father is a policeman, it is really a very stressful job, I could tell it as whenever my father comes back to home, he always has that angry aura around him. My mother used to bring him cold water as soon as he sat on the sofa to open his shoes. Though one day when he came back my brother ran to him and started shouting and crying about my father not getting him the remote-control car that he promised. But, instead of apologizing he slapped my brother and told him to go study. He must have had a rough day to be that angry, though, he apologized to him for that just after he took a bath, and brought him the car the same day. After mom, I am the one who takes care of him now or rather I say I was. He has high B.P, diabetes, high sugar level, hence he has a lot of medicines to eat, mom used to give him those medicines, then me and now Neil will have to do it. And same stands for my grandma, she needs a lot of caring too. My grandfather died saving a kid by jumping in front of the bus which was about to hit that kid and pushing him out of the way. He was my hero and now soon I will get to meet him.

Well, this covers much about me, But, this story is about my past 90 days, 90 days with her, that I wish never have ended.

After I came back from my mother's funeral. I wanted to just mourn and weep all day. But I sat on my chair, opened my books and studied. I sat about 16 hours on that chair and studied about 8 hours. The rest 8 hours were just her memories flooding through my head. Whenever I closed my eyes, I just saw her face, I remember how I won't be able to touch her stomach anymore and how she will not hug me anymore whenever I get sad. Then my grandma came and made me eat something. I ate and then I fell asleep. I slept for more than 12 hours.

On 17<sup>th</sup> march I had my English exam; my head was flooding with the memories of my mother. All that I studied was getting out of my head. I thought I was done for. Then in the examination hall I saw her, the moment I saw her, all those thoughts stopped flooding. I had a crush on her from my first class. We were in same classes but in different sections, so we didn't really meet all those years. I always tried to get a glimpse of her whenever I could. My head got a bit calm after seeing her. I gave my exam and went home. And soon came the Day 1, the when she talked to me. The day we really met.

# DAY 1

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**MARCH 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022**

It was the beginning of spring and the day of my last exam. We had mathematics exam that day. I was good in mathematics so I was not that afraid despite of my conditions. I reached the examination center half an hour before the exam as per the rules, I looked around, then I found her. Fortunately, she was allotted a seat in the same class as mine that day. I was looking at her from a distance. She was mummering something and sweating too. Suddenly she looked up and saw me staring at her. I looked away and hoped that she did not see me. Someone grabbed my shoulder; I turned around and it was her. I tightened my cheeks as I prepared myself for getting slapped in front of everyone. I was blaming myself for being such a creep in my mind and then she spoke.

She said “Hey, I am Claire Rosenbaum, we are from the same school.”

I said in broken and low voice “hey Claire, my name is Neo (few seconds pause), Neo lynch.”

I was confused about why she was introducing herself to me and then she told me that she was nervous about the exam and she heard about me being good at mathematics

from her friends. She asked me to help her out with some last-minute doubts. For me, talking to her was like a dream come true and I happily said “sure, why not.”

I cleared all her doubts and then we told each other good lucks. After that we both gave our exams, I looked at her, she looked happy. Then she noticed me looking at her and gave me a smile.

Invigilator shouted “you two, eyes on your own sheets or I will tear them.”

We both smirked and finished our exams. I was sure that it was my first and last time meeting her as our exams were over. Though I was just happy thinking “At least I got to know her name before school is over.” On my way back to home, I was walking to bus stand lost in thoughts about my mom and my responsibilities. But a sound came from behind “wait, Neo,” I looked back.

It was Claire, she was running to catch up to me. I waited until she caught up to me, she was gasping, I asked her “water?,” she said “yes”. When she finished catching up her breath. I asked “why were you chasing me?.”

She said “thanks for helping me out today.” I took the porch and said “it’s not a big deal, it was all my pleasure,” she smiled.

Then we had a conversation, a conversation that changed my fate from just meeting her once to me becoming more than her best friend.

She asked “are you going to appear in the National Mathematics Olympiad?”

I said “No, are you?”

She said “yes, I appear in every single Olympiad and exams, my father is very serious about my studies so I have to give it my all.”

“So that’s why you were afraid of those doubts this morning?,” I asked.

“Yes, I didn’t want to lose any unnecessary scores, a point less than 9 CGPA and my father goes on a wrath and scold me whole day”, she answered.

“Is there any specific reason for that?,” I asked.

“You see, my father is Jason Rosenbaum, owner of Rosenbaum Textiles,” she replied.

“What? You mean as in the Rosenbaum Textiles,” I asked shockingly.

She said “Yes, that’s the reason I want your help.”

“Help? How?” I questioned.

She said “my father was looking forward to this Olympiad from a long time, But I am not so sure if I would be able to

get a good score. I am good at mathematics, but I just do not think I am at that national Olympiad level”.

“So, how can I help you?,” I asked.

“Today when you were helping me out, I did not feel embarrassed to ask my doubts as I do in front of my tutors.

And, I understood everything better and easily.

The Olympiad is after a month from now, and our exams are over, so I was wondering if you could teach me,” she explained.

I told her that I was good in mathematics but I was not so sure about if I could teach anyone or not.

She grabbed my hand.

My heart started beating faster than a train.

She said “I saw the recent years results of mathematics Olympiad and guess what I found; you were at the top in all of those Olympiads.”

“You stalked me?”

“it’s not like that.”

“I suppose that today was no coincidence either, you intended to test me out, didn’t you?,” I questioned.

She told me that it was a coincidence, At least the “asking doubt” part. She slept late the night before and did not had time to revise in the morning. Though she was stalking me

from quite long, as she always ended up in the second position in all mathematics Olympiad at school. She got curious about me and my studying strategies and all.

I was not sure that was I supposed to be flattered or offended.

“I see, but if I mess your scores up, I won’t be able to forgive myself,” I said.

I was afraid of letting her down, therefore I thought I rather should not help her, though I wanted to spend time with her.

She pressed my hands even tighter, she came closer, my breath stopped, my heart beat was racing so fast that it felt like it was about to explode.

she said, “please Neo, please, please, please. It will be alright until you help me out, if it goes any worse it would be on me.”

I could not hold it back anymore, I said “Okay, I will teach you, so when are we going to start”.

After hearing that, she had this bright smile on her face.

I could feel it, I was falling for her even more.

She asked, “what about starting from day after tomorrow?”

I agreed.



She told me that she had dance classes in evening, hence we agreed on every morning starting from 23<sup>rd</sup> march,2022.

“Where do you live?” I asked her.

She told me that she lived in south district which was same as mine. Her home was just 2 blocks away from my mine, though we never met each other.

We exchanged numbers.

I took a bus to my home and she also got in the car waiting for her, just at a distance and left.

After getting home I thought about her all day.

I nearly got over my mother's death. I was smiling again, my grandma saw me, she smiled too. Finally, we all were getting over it.

I was thinking about Claire again on Day 2(22<sup>nd</sup> march,2022). I revised all that I had to teach her on day 3.

It was exciting to just think that I was going to a girl's home for the first time, and that girl being Claire was like a dream coming true for me.

Then came day 3, the day of my interrogation.

End of day 1!

## DAY 3

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**March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022**

“What is this sound? It is annoying.” I opened my eyes, smashed the alarm off and started getting ready to go to her house.

I was over excited to go to her home, as I thought

“Does she have any siblings? I wonder what her house is like? I should better hurry up or my first impression to her family will be into dust.”

I was doing everything hyper actively, the milk was boiling, I was watching over it and at the same time I was also filling this water bucket in my kitchen.

My phone rang, I did my math and ran to pick up the call.

I picked it up, “Good morning, Neo,” she said.

I heard her voice, I was in wonderlands, “Good morning, Claire,” I replied.

“So, you are coming today, right?” she asked.

I was lost in my thoughts imagining about how we would spend our time together.

“Right?” she asked again.

“Yup, I am,” I said.

“My driver will be there outside your house in half an hour then,” she told me.

“Driver? it’s just 2 blocks, I can walk that much”, I said.

She said that her father was insisting on it, as I was going to help with her studies.

Therefore, I agreed.

“Did you take enough sleep last night, I don’t want you falling asleep between our studies,” I said.

“Yes, I slept enough. By the way, my sister is so excited to meet you”, She tells me.

“What? Why? Did I do something?” I asked in confusion.

“No, you did not do anything. And the rest you can ask her directly,” she said.

I was talking to her then suddenly my feet felt wet, there was smoke in the house and there was this burning smell.

“Heck, I will meet you home then, bye,” I told her and threw my phone on the bed.

I ran to kitchen and turned the tap and stove off. The water and milk were spilled all over the floor. Also, there was this huge black stain of burned milk in the boiler.

I picked the boiler up with my bare hands in hurry, it was so hot that I lost the grip of it. It fell and my fingers also got

burnt a little bit. I ran to ice it, but I slipped over the water that was spilled on the floor and hurt my back.

“What are you doing Neo? Get a hold of yourself,” my grandma said.

I sat there for a minute, took a deep breath, stood up and cleared all the mess that I made.

I took a long bath and then selected my outfit.

I wore a white polo T-shirt pairing it with black trousers, I wore my father’s masculine perfume to impress her, I wore my black leather watch and I was all set.

The driver started honking from outside.

I told my grandma that I would be back in few hours and then I wore my white sneakers and I left.

I was sitting in the back seat of the Mercedes that they had sent. I was thinking if I was looking good or did I do too much. I realized this silence in the car and I thought I should start a conversation with the driver.

“How long have you been working for them?” I asked.

He did not reply. Seemed like he was pissed at me for something. So, I chose to be silent afterward for the whole drive.

I was thinking what her house might be like and then the car stopped.

He got out of the car and opened the gate for me.

I got out and there it was.

It was a huge villa but my eyes got stuck at her, she was standing at the door to welcome me.

My heartbeats were racing as she was walking towards me.

Suddenly someone grabbed my hand from behind and started running towards the house, it was a girl.

It was so sudden that I could not resist, the next moment we were in a girl's room, it smelled nice. She pushed me on the bed and I was just going on with it as my mind did not know what to do. She locked the door, my heart was beating at its max, my face went pale and I just nervously looked at her.

"Open the door, Chloe," Claire shouted from outside.

She opened the door and started laughing.

"You should have seen his face Sis, it was all red and pale," she told Claire.

Claire came in and sat beside me, then she said, "I am sorry about my older sister, I told you that she was excited to meet you."

"So that's what it was, alright," I said in confusion.

"Let us have a proper introduction Neo, I am Claire's older sister, Chloe. You are Neo?" Chloe asked.

“I am Neo lynch, Claire and I studied in same school and I am here to help her out with her studies today.” I said in a single breath.

Claire said, “no need to be so formal Neo, I already told her about you, she is just kidding.”

“Oh, that’s funny, ha,ha”, I faked my laugh.

“By the way Claire, who is that little guy peeking from the room’s door,” I asked Claire and the boy ran away.

She said, “That is my little brother Chris.”

“How old is he?,” I asked.

She said that he was 13.

“He is at the same age as my younger brother Neil,” I told her.

She asked me in which school was he studying and we got to know that both Neil and Chris went to same school as us. Later, we got to know that they were in the same class too and that really caused some problems for a bit, you will find that out as the story goes on.

Claire’s mother brought some snacks for us.

“She is my mother Carol, and mom he is Neo, whom I told you about,” Claire introduced us.

“You didn’t tell me that he is this much handsome,” her mother said.

I blushed.

“Mom....,” Claire gave her the go flag.

“Well kids, now study hard and if you need something just call me,” Mrs. Rosenbaum said and left.

Chloe said, “I am going to study in my room too and Neo, while I am away don’t try to do anything funny with my sister.”

I got scared and just nodded.

“Stop teasing him and just go study, sis,” Claire said to Chloe.

Then we started.

It was around 11 am when we started.

I taught her some tricks to solve questions quickly and told her to try them on few questions herself.

While she was doing so, I was just looking at her, wondering how can someone be this beautiful.

Then a breeze of air came through window and her hairs were blowing. My eyes were just stuck on her and I did not even realize when she started to look at me too.

“No, what are you looking at?” she asked.

I coughed and got a bit awkward and started looking here and there.

“Nothing, just your room,” I said.

She smiled.

There was a photo frame on her desk, it was a photo of her family and there was a spot left empty on it.

“Why didn’t you put any photo in this spot?,” I asked.

She said, “my mother told me that I should keep it empty for photo of someone as important to me as my family is, it should be a person that I can call family.”

“I get it, so it is like you left it empty for your future husband,” I said.

“Yeah, something like that,” she said.

Suddenly my nose started bleeding.

“Are you okay Neo?”

“Yes, where is the restroom?”

“It is right after room next to us.”

I cleared my nose and came back. At the time I ignored it as it was common in teenagers to have nose bleeding.

I came back and got back to studies.

It was around 2 PM when her mother came in and asked us for lunch.



We stopped our studies for the day and I said that I should be going.

We were leaving the room when I saw Chris glaring at me with that look of hatred as he was going to kill me if he gets the chance and I moved after Claire.

We were at the door when Mr. Jason got back home.

“Welcome honey, meet Neo.”

“Hi, sir,” I said.

He did not say anything back.

“He is the same class as our Claire, he was helping her out with her studies,” her mother introduced me.

“Doesn’t she take tuition for that?,” he asked.

“But dad he is the winner of every single math Olympiad in Our school and I understand way better from him than my tutor,” Claire said.

“If you say so then it is okay, So Neo what does your father do?,” he asked.

“He is a Policeman, sir,” I told him.

“Then we should watch ourselves, I don’t want to go to jail,” he said.

We all laughed and the interrogative mood changed to a fun conversation.

“Make sure that she gets the first place then, okay son,” he said.

I got very happy seeing how her family accepted me except Chris whom I was most scared of.

“I will leave then,” I said.

Claire said she would walk me to the main gate of the villa.

As we were walking towards the gate she said, “what do you think?.”

“About what?”

“My family, did you like them.”

“Yes, they seemed like my own family except Chris who seems to hate me for some reason.”

“It is not like that; he probably thinks that I will start to spend less time with him because of you.

“I get it now.”

“So, you will come tomorrow then?”

“Yes.”

She grabbed my hand and said “Thank You Neo” then ran back inside.

I was still in shock; it was like 1000 volts of electricity flowing through my body.

Then the driver opened the door and I sat in the back.

There was silence and I was just smiling thinking about it all in the back.

Then the driver said, “Boy, don’t think anything weird about our Claire.”

I stopped smiling.

We reached and I got out of car.

I got inside my house.

“How was it?” my grandma asked.

I smiled and went to room.

“Okay then just eat your food then, Neo,” she shouted.

End of day 3!

## DAY 6

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**March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

Day 4 & 5 were pretty much about studying, I went to her house, we studied for few hours while Chris tried to kill me with his stares and Chloe teased the hell out us. Soon it was day 6.

I was walking to Claire's house as her driver was on leave. I was thinking about what should I talk to her about if we get into that awkward kind of moment. "Should I talk to her about her favorite movies?", "Or should I talk to her about her friends, no that will be too personal". Suddenly, I heard a boy crying sitting on the side walk.

I went to him, sat down, and looked at him, it was Chris.

I told him to stop crying and asked what happened.

He told me that some boys from his classroom tried to rob him for money and when he denied that he did not had money, they beat him.

I said, "if you cry, they will think that you are weak, are you weak?".

"No."

“We don’t cry, we learn, what do we do?”

“We learn.”

“That’s right now get up.”

I picked him up on my back.

We stopped at a convenience store nearby. I bought him a bottle of juice first. Then I bought a bandage for him. While I was applying it on his scratched elbow, he was looking at me. He did not say anything, he just looked at me.

When we were getting out of the shop Chris stopped.

“What happened Chris?”

He pointed a group of boys in the shop and said, “they are the ones who beat me.”

“Okay, let’s go and teach them a lecture.”

“Yes,” he said.

We walked to them; they were all facing the opposite side. I tapped on the shoulder of one of the boys, he turned.

It was Neil, my younger brother.

I was angry though I was more disappointed in him. He asked “Big brother, why are you here and with him?”

I asked them, “did you guys beat Chris?”

They all looked down and did not say anything. Neil said, “you don’t know how mean he is, he is rich though when

we asked him if we could borrow some money from him, he denied.”

“Really Neil? Who taught you to think like this? I am sure that dad and I did not. If he denied then you should just go, you didn’t have any right to touch him. And in the first place why did you need to borrow money, don’t you get you monthly allowance?,” I scolded him.

“I do get it but there is a new supercool game that came into market and me and my friends really wanted to get that but he didn’t lend us money,” Neil said.

I was so disappointed in him that I just wanted to go home. I told him that he could just have asked me for it.

I said, “I will let Dad handle this, you really need some beating.”

“No brother, I am sorry, I will never do this again, just do not tell Dad,” Neil apologized.

“There is no point in apologizing to me, you should apologize to Chris,” I said.

“I am sorry Chris, I promise that I will never do this again, please forgive me,” he apologized.

“You should also get rid of these friends of yours,” I said.

“Yes, I will,” Neil agreed.

“And you all, if I ever see anyone of you with Neil again you all are going to get scolded,” I said to all other kids with Neil.

They all ran away.

Chris said, “hey Big Bro, could he be my friend?”

I said, “of course, shake hands with him Neil.”

Neil was in shock that how fast Chris forgave him and asked him to be friends.

They smiled at each other and shook hands.

I told Neil to go home.

I carried Chris on my back again.

We were going to his house then he said “can you not tell my sis about what happened.”

I asked him, “why?”

“If my sis finds out that your brother did this to me, she will get angry on you, then you will not come to my house anymore, I don’t want that,” he said.

“Okay I will not tell her, don’t worry.”

There was silence for a few minutes then he said

“Thank you, Big Bro.”

We both smiled and walked on.

Claire was worried waiting for his brother at the gate.

She saw me carrying him on my back.

We went to hall inside and I put him on the Sofa.

“What happened, why are you this late and how did you get all these injuries,” Claire asked.

“I fell,” Chris said.

We both looked at each other and smiled.

“You should be more careful Chris, if Neo hasn’t been there, how would you have gotten home,” Claire said.

I blushed.

“And sis, I also made a friend today, His name is Neil,” Chris said.

“That’s great Chris, who is he?”

“He is Big Bro’s Brother.”

“Big Bro?”

“Yes, he is my Big Bro.”

Claire looked at me, I looked at her then we all smiled.

Then Claire and I went to her room to study.

We sat across the round table that was on the carpeted floor in her room.

I was reading the notes from our last class.



I looked up. She was looking at me, having the prettiest smile that I had ever seen on her face.

I just froze, I looked in her eyes, she was looking into mine. Then she came, slamming the door open and grabbed my collar.

“How can you be this stupid? If he was hurt you should have just ordered a taxi or something you idiot. You did not have to carry him all the way here”, Chloe said.

“But Chloe, Neo brought him back home, you should be thankful for that,” Claire said.

“Don’t try to defend Neo every time Claire.”

I started saying that “I am soar...” she told me to shut up and hugged me.

“Thank you, Neo, Chris is so stupid, how can someone just trip and hurt themselves,” Chloe said.

“I am sorry too Chloe, you are right, I should have just ordered a taxi, it is just that I am not used to that much care myself, therefore I didn’t have much idea about that situation,” I apologized.

Though I did what my parents did for me when I used to hurt myself as kid while playing in the park. My father would scold me and tell me to stop crying, Mother would treat my wounds and tell me a sweet story to calm me. I understood that they were rich and treated situations

according to them, I respected their opinions. I just accepted it all and apologized.

“Well, it was nothing big,” Claire said.

We all smiled.

She always said things that I wanted to say but I could not.

I felt complete whenever I was with her.

“Mom also wanted to thank you so she is baking some cupcakes right now,” Chloe told us.

I said, “that’s sweet of her but she didn’t have to go through all this trouble for me.”

“Let her thank you Neo,” Claire said.

“I am going to study now, you should also get back to studying, your Olympiad is coming close every day,” Chloe said.

She left the room,

“I also have to tell you something about what happened today,” I said to Claire.

I told her about everything that happened, about the bullying, about Neil, how they became friends and how Chris didn’t want me to tell her anything. Though I was scared she would get angry on me.

“Why did he lie to me about this? He likes you more than me now, doesn’t he?,” she said.

“Only Chris can answer that question,” I said.

We laughed and got back to our studies.

After a few minutes her mom brought us cupcakes.

They were too good, they tasted way better to me than anyone else as I missed my mom’s cooking. Dad and I were used to cook at home. It had been too long for me to taste food filled with a mother’s love.

I did not want to make her feel sad for me so I didn’t tell her why I was so happy to eat those cupcakes.

After that we studied for few hours.

I was having headaches for few weeks, but at that point I also started feeling this itch inside my throat.

I started coughing, she asked If I needed water.

I drank some water though nothing changed.

I went to the washroom; I was waiting for my coughing to stop and suddenly I spat blood.

Seeing that I was coughing blood, I knew that I was ill.

I did not tell Claire about this and left for home.

I told my dad about this and we got an appointment with a doctor on 29<sup>th</sup>.

I realized that I should not have ignored all those symptoms.

I was just hoping it was nothing big as I knew, without me, everybody else in my family will be broken. Losing my mother was already a big shock for our family. I just hoped that it was some normal flu or fever, nothing big.

I went for the check up on 29<sup>th</sup> and waited for the reports.

END OF DAY 6!

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## DAY 10

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**March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

They say a new morning comes with new opportunities but for me this morning brought the termination of all my opportunities.

I started reading the reports and in the end of it, it was stated that I was terminal due to my growing cancer that was already in third stage. I had 81 days left. All the headaches and nose bleedings made sense at once. I was in denial at first, I left the reports on table in our hall. I came back to my room, closed the door, and lied on my bed. I laughed first knowing how messed up life was. Everything that was supposed to go wrong was going wrong. First, I lost my mother and now I was going to lose everyone I ever loved. My grandma, father, brother, and her.

It started hitting me slowly, thoughts started flooding through my head. As more as I realized the fact that I would never get to see them after 81 days the more I got broken. My mind went numb and my eyes got wet, I was holding my tears back but the pain was just so much that they did not stop. Just imagine how much would it hurt when you just started feeling alive and you get to know that even that is going to be taken from you.

It felt like I was cursed, every time something good happened to me it was followed by something much bad, though this time it was worst.

My dad was leaving when he saw the reports lying there on the table. My grandma entered my room, her eyes were filled with tears. She hugged me so tight that I could barely breathe. There was that look in her eyes, the look of pity.

“Grandma, it is ok, I am fine,” I said.

She said, “It is not okay, why did this happen. You are just a kid. Why is everything so difficult? why is it so painful? This was not how it was supposed to be. You were supposed to enjoy your youth, go out with girls, Marry the love of your life one day, have kids. This did not have to be this hard.”

Seeing how broken she was by this made me cry even more.

“Probably it is just a wrong report and nothing is wrong,” she said in denial.

“Reports are not wrong Grandma; I have had the symptoms for few weeks now.”

“Why didn’t you say anything before? It could have come out differently if we knew.”

“I didn’t want to bother anyone anymore Grandma, everyone was already suffering because of mom’s death.”

“Why do you kids have to be so mature. You are supposed to tell us if anything is wrong, not overthink it by yourself. Now it came out even worse. Not only for you, for everyone that liked you, what are you going to say to Neil? And your dad is even more broken than me right now. He didn’t want to come see you because he can’t stop his tears, he didn’t want to make you any more sad than you already are. He blames himself for everything, he thinks it was his fault that you did not tell us anything”.

“I am sorry, Grandma, I am so sorry.”

“It is too late for apologies now Neo, I want you to live the rest of your time at your fullest, every moment that you are going to spend will never come back so savor every little bit of joy you can get.”

“Yes Grandma, I promise that I will enjoy it as much as I can but before that I have to make somethings right, I don’t want to die with regrets.”

I got out of my room and went to my dad; he was sitting in the hall. His eyes were filled with tears. I sat beside him.

“I am sorry Neo, I should have talked to you more, I should have been more friendly, I failed as a dad, even my son couldn’t come to me and tell me his problems.”

“It is not your fault dad, I was too naïve, I overthought about it and messed it all up, really dad, no son could have a better father than you. You had to be strict with us in

times, whenever you punished us, it hurt you more than us.

But you understood your place and did it. If I could choose who my father will be in my next life, I would ask for you every single time.”

I hugged him after saying that.

“Do you know who was the happiest person in this world when you were born Neo?,” my dad asked.

“Grandma?” I said.

“It was me, when the nurse told me that I had a healthy boy I was so happy that I ran to the sweet shop instantly, shouting that I had a boy, I gave sweets to every single person I saw on my way back, I ran across all the floors of hospital giving sweets to everyone telling them that I had a boy.”

“You did all that? You do not seem that way, dad.”

“Oh, I did it alright. Then the nurse allowed me to see you after a bit. Your mom and I were so happy. All we thought was how were we going to take care of you. You were our first child so we both were still new to all that parenting thing.

When you got 3 years old, you somehow managed to put the hot iron on your foot that I just had used. Your mother



saw you crying, but standing still with the hot iron still lying on your feet.

Then when you got five you wanted to get off the bike on your own and you managed to get burned by the hot silencer of the bike.

We sucked at parenting but we loved you, we were ready to go to any lengths for you and your little born brother.

You meant the world to us.

All we wanted was to make sure was that you both were happy, you grow to be all that we could not be”.

“What are you talking about dad, you are the best parent in this whole world, all I could ever want to be is to be a gentleman like you, respect everyone like you do, to be responsible like you, to make tough decisions when they were necessary like you”.

“Thank you, Neo. For making our lives so much better, you are the perfect kid that a parent could want, I want you to live the rest of the time as you want, do not think about consequences and responsibilities, I am supposed to that and I will, you can ask me for anything you want, I would even give my life if I could If it meant you get mine”.

“Thank you, dad, for taking care of me and making me everything I am right now.”

We both smiled and then I went back to my room.

And then I realized this meant that I did not have much time with Claire. I wanted to tell her that I liked her because I did not want to waste much time. I wanted to have every moment I could have with her.

I gathered the courage and called her.

She picked up.

“Hello Claire, it’s Neo”

“Well, this is a first, you never called me before”

“Actually, I wanted to tell you something”

“Yes? What is it?”

“I would like to tell it to you in person”

“Oh, when do you want to meet then?”

“Are you free today evening?”

“Umm... Sorry Neo I am going on a date with my boyfriend in the evening”

“What?”

“Yeah, it is his birthday today so we planned to go out”

“You have a boyfriend?”

“Oh, that’s right I never told you about him, his name is jack”

“That’s great Claire, I will see you tomorrow”

And then I hung up on her.

As if everything was not bad, this got added up in the pile too. At that time, I was just losing myself. I did not know what wrong I had done to deserve all that. I never got anything that I ever loved. Still, I hoped for everything to get better, never treated anyone badly but all I did was to suffer. I suffered all the way through life and it all came to an end but not the way I wanted. I was overthinking like always, and then, the door opened and there was Neil standing there.

“Big brother, grandma was crying so I asked her what happened and she told me that you are going to leave soon, where are you going?”

It was hard for me to even look at him, all my responsibilities were going to be his now. He is just a kid; he also lost his mother and now he was going to lose his brother too. With all that pain I looked at him and said “I am going away Neil.”

He asked me “for how long big bro?”

“Forever, but I will always be with you” I said.

“Are you going to die Big bro?”, he asked. I could not answer him, I just patted him on his head as tears fell down my cheeks.

End of day 10!

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## DAY 11

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**March 31<sup>st</sup> 2022**

I woke up, my grandma was sitting there, right beside me.

“Hey grandma, how long have you been here?”

“Not for long, I just want to admire your pretty little face till you are with us”

“Grandma I get it that you don’t want me to die so soon, but it cannot be changed”

“I know, that is why I am going to have all the time I can have with you Neo,” her eyes got wet while saying that.

“I would like to live as much as an average human being too, but now that this is my fate, I want you accept that and I want you to not treat me differently, that is like a constant reminder for me that I don’t have much time Grandma,” I said with a heavy heart.

My dad entered the room and said, “I figured that you would say that, I also tried to tell her that sitting and looking at you for hours isn’t going to make you better, it will just remind you of everything.”

My grandma said, “so you two want me to just accept it and move on with it? I am sorry but I cannot do that, he is

the boy that grew in front of my eyes, the boy I fed with my hands, I cannot just pretend that nothing happened.”

She got up and left the room.

“Well, that was a good morning for sure,” my dad said.

We both smiled.

“Dad, I know you are just as sad as her, I am sorry that I am going away.”

“It’s not your fault son, I told you that you are a blessing for us.”

“Dad, I want to spend more time with you all too but it will just remind of my time slipping right beneath my feet.”

“I know son and that is why we are going on a family vacation to Bali next month.”

Neil entered the room jumping and shouting, “yes, we are going to Bali, yeah, I am going to go tell Chris.”

“Be careful Neil, you will get hurt.”

Neil ran out of the room.

I looked at my dad and he looked at me and then we both smiled.

“You knew dad?”

“Yes, your mom told me once that you wanted to go to Bali with your family”

“I am so happy Dad”

“I hope your mom is happy too where she is”

“I am sure she will be, dad”

We smiled and he patted me on my head.

“Who is this Chris that Neil was talking about?,” my dad asked.

“He is Neil’s friend and his older sister Claire is my friend,” I told him.

“That is a lot of connection Son”

We laughed.

“What’s their surname”

“It is “Rosenbaum” dad, as in “Jason Rosenbaum”

“That’s a weird coincidence, he is my friend”

“What? For real dad?”

“Yes, there was I time I escorted him through the airport, then we talked a bit and after that we had drinks together a couple of times, but he only mentioned a single girl, her name was Chloe I guess”

“How long have you not met him dad?”

“It’s been like 18 years now”

“That’s a very long-time dad, Chloe is the eldest sister, 20 years old, Claire is my about my age and Chris is as old as Neil”

“It’s really been long, isn’t it, can you get Jason’s number from Claire?”

“Umm. I guess yes, I am going to meet her today”

“Great then, what time are you going to meet her?”

I looked at my watch and my soul just left me. She texted me to meet her at a Café nearby at 10 in the morning and it was already 9:30. I got up and started running here and there to get ready. But then it hit me that she told me about Jack, and suddenly I stopped. I thought, what was the point in being nice after that. I took my time and got ready and reached café at like 10:30.

There she was, even though I was pulling the tough guy act just a glimpse of her took it all away. I was already regretting about being late. And as I was going closer my mind was going numb because I didn’t know what to say to her as I was the one that called her.

I went more closer and as her face became clearer I saw tears in her eyes and her eyes were all sore. I ran to her and sat in front of her.

“I am very sorry for being late Claire, please stop crying, I am sorry that you felt stood up.”

She just kept crying

“Hey just hit me, curse me, but please don’t cry.”

She hugged me, I was in shock for a moment and then I hugged her back.

Then she said, “We broke up yesterday, Jack and I.”

I was kind of happy that I had a chance again but also sad that she was crying so badly, I calmed her down.

I bought her an ice cream and then she started telling me about it.

She told me that he brought few of his friends with him at their date and later they disrespected her and when she scolded them, Jack told her that she was overreacting.

She told me how he always puts everyone else above her and how she was losing feelings for him from a long time. She realized that it was just a kid’s relationship with no pillars to stand on. And when she told him to choose between his disrespectful friends and her, he chose his friends.

“Jack, more like a jerk,” I said.

“You know, you are right he is total douchebag”

“Come with me Claire,” I said.

I took her to a lake nearby and we I picked two rocks; I gave one to her and kept one myself.



Then I shouted, "I miss you mom" and then I threw the rock in the lake.

"What was that Neo? everybody is looking at us," she asked.

"Don't worry about everyone, just let it all out and then sink it all away with the rock."

She hesitated at first then she shouted, "You are a jerk Jack, I hate you" and then she threw the rock in the lake.

I looked at her and she looked at me then we both started laughing, I wiped rest of the tears off her cheeks and then she hugged me again.

"Thank you, Neo"

"I will be here whenever you need me Claire," I said.

Then she pushed me away and started punching me with her soft little fists.

"You are a jerk too Neo, I thought you stood me up, you also hung up on me yesterday"

"I am very sorry for that Claire"

"It's okay, just never do it again"

"I will not Claire"

"So, what did you want to talk about?"

I froze as my mind went blank because she had just got broken up and I cannot just put her in this situation so soon again.

“What is it, Neo?”

“Umm... yes, I wanted to ask you for your father’s number”

“And you wanted to meet me in person for only that?”

“Yes, I thought we could use some time to let the heat out after studying every day too”

I was thanking my dad in my mind, if he hadn’t told me to get Mr. Rosenbaum’s number, I would have messed it all up today.

Then she gave me her dad’s number and asked me, “did something happen to your mom? You shouted you miss her.”

I was not so sure, if I wanted to tell her about that or not.

“What if she thinks that I just want her sympathy and I just want to leach onto her,” I thought. She stood still waiting for a response. I looked at my wristwatch and said, “damn it, I am late, I have to receive Neil from school, sorry Claire but I have to go.” I know it was stupid, I could have just told her everything simply. I left and when I looked back, I saw that she stood still looking at the lake, thinking about something. Later, I realized that it was HOLIDAY!

End of day 11!