

## **Nature is my Friend**

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She lay lifeless in bed, wrapped around in her comforter, with the phone against her ear silently listening to the voice on the other end, blankly answering in yes and no when necessary. She was frustrated of being lonely. Loneliness stuck to her for a long time now. It seemed as though it became her best friend even though she tried to shoo it away. She tried so hard to scare loneliness but in vain. Sometimes, she thought loneliness was lonely too and somewhere along the way it found Sarah and befriended her. Sarah tried to help loneliness, or so she thought, but loneliness had influenced Sarah to become like it. She didn't want to be the person she was now.

The voice on the other end kept asking "What is the matter, Sarah? Will you not tell me? If you don't tell me, how am I to help you?"

What was there to say, she thought. Nothing, absolutely nothing. No one can help her now. Talking about it would be only complaining about life and her present unwanted best friend. It is not normal to complain about ones best friend. Sarah thought, if she was talking to herself at that moment, she would completely lose all patience and hang up on herself. Where is this person getting the patience to deal with her? She lay on the bed as still as can be. She refused to move, even to change position. She tried to be calm and tried so hard to fall asleep while he was still on the other end. She felt a certain sense of warmth when she heard him breathe. Speech didn't quite matter. Just to know he was on the other end, gave her strength and peace. The voice on the other end lost hope. "You don't seem to want to talk to me anymore Sarah. Good night." There was a click and he was gone. She continued to lie still hoping the phone would buzz again. It didn't. She placed her phone on the bed stand, just moving enough to execute the action.

Returning to her steady posture, she stared at the ceiling. It was almost dark around her. A mint aroma filled the room. The candle burnt very lightly, almost going out as the wicks got submerged into the dark green molten wax. She had never used mint candles before. She thought, it wasn't bad after all. Numerous thoughts ran across her mind. She thought, what exactly was her problem? Why was she falling into depression? Was she falling into depression really or was it just an assumption? Did she need counseling or did she need that voice on the other end of the phone to be around her at all times? Did she need him both physically and mentally? Will loneliness leave her then? Will this phase go by and will happiness take over? Didn't happiness want to be her friend? She had no answers to these questions nor did she make an attempt to answer. A severe headache bothered her physical calmness. Mental calmness was no where to be seen.

Sarah was a very lively and spontaneous individual. She was known to bring a smile on everyone's face around her. What had happened to her now, she thought. She wished she would go back in time and become the old Sarah she always loved being. Life had worn her out. But was that even possible at her age, mid twenties?

She went back in time, in her mind. It was December of 2004. The winter had been harsh that year. The snow knocked on the doors of New Jersey early. The month of December is usually lively due to all the festivities lined up for the month. People were happy everywhere. At this time of the year, people usually tend to become a better person, just for a month. The softer side of them somehow wakes up from hibernation and covers up their attitudes. Anger and irritancy rest in the month of December.

Sarah would meet him for the first time. She was very nervous, which was not usual of her. Flings came numerous times in her life. Crushes had lost their tingle effect on her. She was ready for a commitment. For some odd reason, she thought, this was the person she had been waiting for all along. The plane landed in Somewhere, GA. She had butterflies in her stomach since the night before. Sleep wasn't around her. She was fresh and caffeinated even in the absence of sleep. She was very happy.

December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004 was a cold bright sunny morning both in Somewhere, New Jersey and Somewhere, Georgia. New Jersey was slightly chillier than the south however. Sarah was dressed in black simply because it was her favorite color. She didn't wear a lot of color at the time and her wardrobe was intolerably mundane. She used to be a tom boy. There was no desire in her to become attractive or be attracted to. Her taste was so limited and she strongly maintained it. There was no reason for her to glow in appearance. She trusted her personality to the zenith. With time however, she would realize she was wrong all along. He would have changed her drastically. He would have brought desire in Sarah's life. He would have taught her to love and be loved again.

Walking out of the plane and towards the baggage claim, Sarah wondered, how was he to look like? They discussed what she would wear. Somehow he vaguely mentioned what he would wear. She liked surprises and she was sure this was going to be a surprise she was going to like. She was subconsciously sure he was true love. He was what she was seeking all along. She felt as though she could plan out all her life hence forth. The concept of life was so simple in her mind at the time. What could possibly go wrong? She was so naïve.

She walked to baggage claim, frantically looking for him everywhere. Her phone rang. She was certain he was playing tricks and he was. Not once did she consider that he would just glance at her and leave or that he would not even show up. She answered her phone, "Where are you? Stop playing games with me." Laughter filled her ears. He said, "Find me Sarah." Her eyes were searching him even whilst speaking. He was nowhere to be seen. He said, "I can see you, why are you so nervous? Find me." She said, "I give up. Come to me now, will you please."

He was walking towards her. She still didn't notice him. She continued searching for him amongst the crowd. He stood right in front of her and said in his deep voice, "Hello." She stared at him. He sounded so much better in person than on the phone, she thought. She replied back, "Hi." Did he think so too? He hugged her. He hugged her very hard. No one had hugged her so passionately before. She had hugged so many people up until now but he was different. It was as though he meant something he was trying to convey. He meant when he was hugging and he was hugging with love. She didn't want to let go. They stood there with him hugging her, wrapped around in his arms, for several seconds, amongst the busy passengers and suitcases. She felt as though she was surrounded in an invisible blanket, separating her from the noisy surrounding. Time had come to a standstill. She wished it would remain like that for longer.

They grabbed her suitcase and headed towards his car. He was a handsome young man with dark complexion and dark hair. He was tall, physically attractive and spoke very clearly. He enunciated every word he said which seemed interesting. When she spoke to him over the phone, she refused to picture him in her mind out of stubbornness or anger she wasn't sure. But now, she was happy she hadn't pictured him. She liked the surprise. She was falling in love with him already. Was this how it felt to be in love at first sight, she thought. She didn't believe in that concept, then why was she thinking about it. Losing track of her thoughts, she walked with him on her side. He gently held her hand. She was still nervous and confused if she ought to start a conversation. It seemed as though both of them enjoyed the silence. They were talking, but in

their minds and to themselves. Wishing she could read his mind, she turned towards him and smiled. He said, "Here we are!"

They sat in the car. He turned towards her and stared into her eyes. She was uncomfortable and looked in another direction. Breaking the silence, she said, "What music do you have?" He said, "What do you want to listen to?" "It doesn't matter. Any sort of music will do", she said. They started off for Somewhere AL. The two and half hour trip seemed to last forever. Both of them were nervous. He however, held her hand all throughout the drive. She wanted him to kiss her but he didn't. Perhaps he was nervous too. They spoke about school, life and family along the way.

Lunch was rather confusing. They hardly ate, yet they were having lunch or that was the intention. She loves to eat, nevertheless she was unable to. She ordered chicken with scanty veggies and he, Buffalo wings. He realized that was a bad choice too. During lunch, he stared at her continuously. She still remembered his eyes, mysterious but blunt. It was hard to say what he was thinking or even if he was thinking by looking at his eyes. She was very calm on the outside but very uncomfortable on the inside. She tried to portray confidence at all times. It was very important she maintained her calm. The food lay on the plate merely with shifted positions. Neither of them ate. Very few words were exchanged. Surprisingly, she was still not tired. They left for home.

He was a graduate student and lived in a studio. He lived a very humble life and loved technology and football. He opened the door to his studio and she stood at the entrance. She looked around. It felt very cozy. The sunlight forced itself to lighten the place through the blinds on the window. There was a romantic scent dispersed. A couch lay at the far end of the room. She took her coat off and seated herself on the couch. He turned on the television. She didn't quite care what was on TV. He sat beside her. Suddenly, she felt chills, goose bumps. Was he was doing this to her? He turned towards her and said, "This is my home away from home." She looked around again. On the wall were a cheaply framed picture of his family and a huge map of America. She said, "I like it." He felt her soft skin and leant towards her slowly. She waited for this moment since the time she saw him. He moved closer, she could feel his breath, mint. She closed her eyes and felt his lips touch hers. His lips were very soft unlike his rough looks. Rubbing his lips against her gently, he kissed her passionately. She kissed him back. Again, she was lost somewhere she didn't know. She hadn't felt this feeling in a long time. She acknowledged the love and passion in her mind.

The phone rang again. Sarah snapped out of her thoughts. Still staring at the ceiling, she wondered if she should disturb her posture and calmness to answer the call. Who could it be this late? Nobody called her this late. Maybe it was him again. She longed to talk to him. She longed for him physically and mentally. She wanted warmth in her life and even more so in the harsh winter of New Jersey. Sitting up a little she took a look at her phone. It wasn't him. She decided she would sit up for sometime. Trying to get back in time, she tried to think of December again, but in vain. She was tired, tired of nothing in her life, tired of having everything yet not being able to reach for it, tired of trying to reach for it, tired of complaining and tired of her best friend, loneliness. She thought, what had happened to her, again?

The candle tried hard to keep burning. The light from it kept flickering rapidly. The room was filled with disturbing patterns of light. She thought, her life was somewhat like that, disturbed. It wasn't where it was supposed to be. It had been almost two years since she first met him. Time had done so much change. Or was it time, she thought. Why was she being so difficult? What had he done wrong? It was her who implemented the change over time, hung on

to a past to overcome insecurity, was frightened to depend on him or on love, feared if the change would hurt her, then why had it brought a difference in her?

As she questioned her thoughts and sat still against the wall, she realized she was just more so in love than she was two years ago. She had more responsibilities towards this relationship she was involved in which she wasn't able to confront at times or most times. There was more to love than she expected and somehow she didn't see it. She thought initially, everyday would be a new day of learning about him and vice versa but she failed to accept there would not be an everyday in reality. She failed to accept or even consider the thought he would be miles away from her. She realized there was still so much more to him than she knew. Suddenly, she missed him more than ever before. She recalled his scent and the warmth of his breath. He emitted heat from his body, she sensed it. She wanted him to hold her. She craved for him and his warmth. And moments like this, she realized, had infuriated her over time. So was it really her fault she had become bitter? She was confused, angry, depressed, scared, deprived and above all alone.

Sarah looked at the clock. It seemed as though she had to spend a huge amount of energy to turn her head in order to take a look at the electric clock that sat on the bed stand. It was quarter to midnight. She had to sleep, she thought, or it was going to be hard for her to go to work the following morning. Scanning her room, she thought, how messy it had been lately. She never let her room this messy before. Everything was always put in its place. But now, she noticed her clothes lay on the chair since three weeks and she hadn't even thought of keeping them back to where they belonged. What had gotten into her? Sarah wasn't like this before. She tried to recall what she used to be like.

Sarah was a confident and independent young woman. She always knew what to do and she did it right. Although, she should think she still is but something had brought the confusion in her mind. Was she confident and independent enough now? She was a happy and easy going person. She won the title 'Easy going Sarah' in high school. Smile was always what she had with her and offered to others around her. She is friendly and lovable. People around her enjoyed her company, or so she thought now. Sarah was the kind to encourage people when in distress. She stood by her friends and gave them hope. Now, she wasn't able to encourage herself. Where was the hope and strength in her? Had she lost the confidence? Somehow she felt she had become a vegetable now. Her emotions seem to have locked themselves up somewhere in some safe and she was unable to locate it. It seemed as though she could hear them yell out to her, they wanted her to find them but in vain. She lazed around and tried to ignore the screams.

The wind was happy outside. It sang, swish, and swoosh. Sarah decided to step out for a while and greet the wind. Maybe it could make her smile. She walked out of bed and felt a shiver. It was colder than usual she predicted. Grabbing a shawl, she opened her front door and walked a few steps into the open parking lot. The wind was indeed happy. It rushed through the leafless trees, controlling their branches and leading them in the direction where it went. She looked up at the sky. There were dense clouds running across the moon, covering it up at times. The wind was playing with the clouds. It took them along its way. She got a glance of the full moon. It was happy too. It shone as brightly as it could. The scars on the moon made it look even more beautiful she thought. She ran her fingers on her face to feel her scars. Did they make her beautiful too, she thought? Or maybe the scars in her life, will they make her life beautiful? She hadn't noticed the moon this closely before. She felt a certain peace. The wind blew strongly but it was serene around her. She enjoyed the chilling cold wind against her skin and through her hair. Every part of her was alive enhanced by the cold wind. She realized she was only a minute element of this huge world she was a part of. There was so much to it than she ever noticed. He

was not the only element that was a part of her life but this wind, the trees, the moon, the sun, the stars, the cloud, the earth etc were all a part of her life in some way or the other. Nature made her happy. The clouds cleared the path between Sarah and the moon. She smiled at the moon and the sky. She also could see the stars twinkling at her. They shone only for her. The world around her was all asleep. They had traveled to another world then. She and only she were out there standing talking to the sky. Indeed the sky, the moon, the stars and the wind were talking to her too. She breathed in the fresh air and filled her lungs. She felt the cold air inside her lungs. Life will pass her by, she thought, and she had to act right then. She wasn't going to look around with a grin anymore.

Sarah lost track of time. Her limbs were numb from the cold. She yawned. The wind whispered to her to crawl in her warm bed and join the others in the other world. The moon and the stars agreed. She walked into her neatly decorated apartment. She stood at the entrance and sensed comfort and satisfaction. Sighing, she walked towards her bedroom. She snuggled with Elmo, closed her eyes and smiled. It was half past two at night. She reminded herself there was a meeting to attend in a few hours.

Sarah dozed off to join the world in dream land.