

Hope for the Hopeless

The first thing I noticed about her was a white scar that ran from the tip of her wrist to her elbow. She wore a crisp black shirt that contrasted with her pale skin and bright green eyes, and snug jeans that were faded to many washes. *She's changed*, I thought. *She doesn't look as crazy as she used to*. I strolled into the warm coffee shop, never once looking away from her. She was slumped in her stool and fiddling with her straw, seeming a bit nervous. That's exactly how I remember her, back in chemistry class at J. Thompson Senior High. Back then, she was branded as a freak. I suddenly remembered: *Thalia*. That's what her name was. I decided to go and see how she's been doing and tapped her on the shoulder.

"Hey, mind if I sit next to you?" I met her eyes and smiled.

"That's fine." She turned her back to me and sipped her coffee.

"Are you okay? You seem a bit shaken up," I said to her, trying to sound as casual as possible.

"Do I know you?" Thalia bitterly replied.

"Actually, you do. You were obsessed with me back in high school," he chuckled. "J. Thompson Senior High? Drake Mitchell? Does it ring a bell?"

"Oh, that's right. Sorry about that. I'm just a little upset today. It's the anniversary of my brother's death."

I stopped smiling and placed an arm around her. I didn't know why I was hugging her, especially after all these years, but she looked like she needed one.

"I'm really sorry about Johnny," I said into her shoulder.

“It’s okay,” she replied, wrapping her arms around me tighter.

All of these feelings rushed back from sophomore year and hit me right in the face. I remember she was a bit on the wild side; always slipping love notes into my backpack and staring at me in class. It was weird, I guess. I never really told anyone that I kind of liked Thalia back. I didn’t want rumors to spread. In junior year, no one talked to her. That’s probably because she tried to kill herself at school. In the middle of lunch she was sitting at her usual table—the empty one—and being her usual self; quiet. I sat at the table across from her. She was muttering to herself; slowly at first, but then it rose to a psychotic cry and she started to bang her fists on the table. Thalia jumped up and kicked the table, punched and started pulling at her hair.

At this point everyone was staring at her, and I’m not sure who, but someone called for help. A couple of teachers rushed to the cafeteria and tried to calm Thalia down, but this only made it worse. There were streaks of tears mixed with mascara running down her face, and I remember her giving me a long stare before the ambulance came and strapped her down. We didn’t hear from her for a while, and the whole school was broiling with gossip. When she came back, no one even walked in her path. It was considered sin to breathe the same air as her. I felt bad for her, but I didn’t know what to do.

“Excuse me? Hello?” Thalia’s voice shook me back to the present.

“Oh, sorry.”

“What were you thinking about?”

“Nothing.”

“No, I know what you were thinking about. You were thinking about the day I went all psycho at school.”

“No I wasn’t,” I lamely replied.

“Don’t lie to me, I know. It’s fine.”

“Sorry. Are you—“

“Okay? Yes, I’m fine. Actually, I’m not. My brother’s dead. Why on Earth would I be okay?” Her fists clenched on the granite and her eyes were a swirling pool of greens and blues.

“Just talk about it, okay? Let it out,” I placed my hand over hers and she flinched. Then she looked me dead in the eye and started to speak:

“Johnny was one of those ‘bad boys’ that were always in trouble, okay? He did drugs, he sold them, he cheated and stole; there really wasn’t anything he didn’t do. My mom shipped him off to a boarding school so he could ‘shape-up’. I soon found out that he joined a gang there. Boy, was she wrong. All the police told me was that he was shot in a drive-by and he died instantly. Bled to death, I think. They dropped the case and never touched it again. We still don’t know who killed him, and my mom’s going to court to find out. He was the only person I was close to. He understood me.” A small tear ran down Thalia’s cheek and I reached out my hand to wipe it away. Her face was a rigid cold, and now a bit damp like a stone left out in the rain. She immediately swatted it away.

“I’m sorry to hear that, Thalia,” I whispered. She stiffened.

“It’s going to be all right. It’s normal to mourn after someone you really loved.”

“Yes, I know that,” she bit back. “I just wish it was me who died, not him. Why am I still here? They should have let me kill myself in junior year. ”

“No, Thalia, don’t think that way. Please, just relax. It’s going to be alright—”

“How the fuck are you so sure, huh? Do you think you’re God? No, it’s not going to be alright. I’ll be dead by tomorrow morning; then I’ll be with my Johnny forever,” she said with a stretched smile. I realized why people avoided her.

“No, Thalia, stop it. I’m not letting you die,” I pleaded. My mind was whirring and I was getting dizzy. *I can’t let this happen. Not again. Susan looked so peaceful when she jumped off that balcony. I was too late. I tried to grab her by the waist but she wriggled free to her planned death, smiling even. My cousin is gone, and I can’t let Thalia go either. I won’t.*

“Thalia, I know what it’s like to lose someone you love.”

“Really? Who?” Her eyes softened the slightest bit.

“My cousin, Susan, jumped off a balcony five years ago.” My hands were shaking. Thalia noticed, and she held them.

“I’m sorry about that, Drake.” she said. She actually sounded sincere.

“So if you die, how would that make me feel? I already let someone die; I was too late.” the words slithered out of my mouth and her eyes widened. Thalia suddenly threw her arms around me and began to sob.

“Please don’t die, Thalia. I don’t want you to die,” I said into her hair.

“You really mean that?” she whispered as she looked up, her eyes languid and aqua. I touched my hand to her face, and she didn’t cringe this time.

“Absolutely,” I said to her. Thalia cracked a smile, and then she kissed me. Again, those locked-up emotions escaped and I expressed all of my hidden feelings for her through my lips. When we pulled back, there was something in her eye; though it wasn’t a tear. It was hope.