

Recovery

The smell of the dirt and rain suffocate me as I stand at her grave. I am weakened by the sound of shovels as they dig their blades into the frail earth. I remember saying goodbye as she lay on her death bed.

"Do you remember the first time we met?" she asked. Her black eyes held onto her last moments of life.

"Of course," I said trying to hold the tears and sound of sadness out of my voice. The Doctor told me a few minutes before that she was to die any minute and I didn't want her to be sad about leaving me. For these last few minutes she needed to think I was going to be OK.

Smiling she continued, "We were both 10 and you stopped those boys from picking on me."

I put on a smile replying, "You were always the one I loved. I knew it when I first saw you."

"I know." Our eyes connected one last time. I remember them when they were full of happiness. Her black hair fell to the center of her back. "Goodbye Roy, at least for now."

Her eyes started to close. "No. Please don't go, not yet. I love you and I'm not ready to let you go yet." Holding her hand afraid to let go, the sadness starts to consume my voice. "Julia. Julia, please don't go. I love you. I need you." She used the last of her strength to give my hand one last squeeze and then everything stopped.

The monitor stopped moving and all I could see was a zero on the screen. Her face grew pale and was lifeless. "Julia," I said to myself. No reply "Julia!" No reply. I rested my head on my forearm. "Please Julia. Please come back to me." Tears streamed down my face as I stroked her beautiful, black hair one last time like I used to. Hours later, the doctor asked me to leave the room. I took in her face one last time before leaving.

As I walked out I looked back. "Goodbye Julia."

Here I am two weeks later at her funeral. The wind blows my black hair to the side and I feel every wet drop of rain strike my hair. I'm the last one to leave. Julia Miller, I think seeing her gravesite. Not being able to take anymore I go back home. I live close enough to walk home. The rain makes me think and I dread every minute when I get inside. I slam the door and scream. "Why did she have to die?!" I fall to my knees as the tears come down. It's not fair. I pull out a bottle of wine from my closet which helps me calm down.

When I think clearly again, I take a shower and change into warmer clothes. While pulling out a shirt from the closet I see a book sticking out that says diary. "This must be Julia's diary." Curious I decide to read the book.

Once in my kitchen, I flip through a couple of pages until I see a date I recognize.

September 17, 2009

Today was my first kiss. Me and Roy went to the park for a picnic but it rained on us. We didn't mind though, we just ran around and laughed like nothing happened. On the way home, he lent me his jacket to keep me warm. Once at the doorsteps he started small talk. After a few minutes he was about to leave. I was a bit disappointed but then my heart stopped when he said "Julia wait."

When I turned around he kissed me. I remember every detail. My heart seemed to skip a beat. At first I was shocked but slowly I leaned into him. Reacting, I kissed him back. His lips were soft and I could smell a hint of cologne. When he finally stepped back pulling away from me I felt the heat in my cheeks rising. "Well I should get going," he said. "See you tomorrow, Julia." I couldn't say anything because I was shocked about what just happened. Since we were children, I felt an attachment to him but now I think more clearly and I know for sure that I love him.

I skim through the pages until I see a date that catches my eye.

March 1, 2010

It is our six month anniversary. I can't believe we have been together this long. We talk to each other almost every day and I know everything about him. My parents like him. They say he's a good guy. He took me somewhere special tonight. We went to a diner downtown and then to our park. While there, he pulled something out of his pocket.

"I want you to have this," the moonlight seemed to radiate around him. He wore a nice suit and his hair was combed neatly to the side. In his hand was a locket with the initial "R" engraved on it. He put it on me. "You look beautiful."

The air was cool. I put my head down on his lap and gazed up at the stars. That was the first time he stroked my hair. At first I was confused until he smiled. It made me feel better. Feeling each strand of hair twirling in his fingers I sighed and relaxed. "Roy," I said looking at him.

"Ya" he replied.

"I love you."

Without another word he kissed me and after whispered "and I love you."

When I see this part, I almost cry. That locket was her favorite piece of jewelry. She wore it all the time. As I continue strolling through the pages I see pictures Julia had glued to the fragile pages. One contained an image of when we went to an amusement park. When I flipped the page I saw us and a group of friends celebrating the end of our junior year.

The memory of that night is as clear as day. That night, we all went up to the mountains and made a big bon fire. We roasted marshmallows and I remember as Julia threw one at me which led to a marshmallow war. Someone brought six packs of beer and we all ended up passing out in the back of Bob's truck. When we finally woke up, we headed back to town and went to the local amusement park.

On the way back we found out that our friend John was in a car accident. Ironically, he was completely sober. A drunk driver had hit him. John was severely wounded. The crash left him with several broken ribs and a concussion. With several 3rd degree burns, he almost died.

At that moment, the thought of death rose in my mind. I was so traumatized at the thought that I refused to leave the house or have anyone else come in for weeks. Julia called every few hours and in each message she pleaded that I would call her back. A couple of times she tried to come in and see me. I wasn't ready to see her. I had mom send her away.

After two weeks, my father came to talk to me. Everyone said I looked like him and at that moment I considered those comments. We both shared short black hair and black eyes. The only thing is that I was outgoing and social. Father was always serious and barely even talked to us. Mom said that even though he seemed heartless he really cared for us. I never believed her till then. At that moment, I was scared. I thought that if father was here then I had really pushed him too far. I was expecting a discipline session but nothing happened. He just sat at the edge of my bed and looked at the wall.

"Dad," I said hesitantly. "What do you think happens when we die? What do you think my destiny is?"

His focus remained on the wall as if he hadn't heard a single word I had said. He sighed and I nodded hoping that he would answer. He took a deep breath. His voice was bitter and rough. "Son, I don't know what will happen when we die".

I didn't expect anything more from him. Turning around I was about to go back to my state of depression. Out of nowhere his voice softened and he said, "However, I don't believe that fate is one big event or just the big picture; but instead it's all the little events that build who we really are."

He stood up and gave me a hug. Never had my father shown any affection to me. The fact that he did meant the world to me. "I know that you may think life is just living up to die but its so much more. You need to find that out for yourself." When he was about to leave I called out.

"Dad, I don't know what to do."

He went back to his normal tone and his expression hardened as he looked me in the eye. "Of course you do, you just have to be brave enough to do it."

I never forgot any of that conversation because he died soon after.

October 23, 2011

Today me and Roy went to a fancy restaurant. It was strange because we never did anything like this before. He was really nervous and was blushing the whole night. After dinner he started to talk. His voice trembled. "Listen Julia," he said clearing his throat. Without expecting anything he knelt down on one knee and said, "Will you marry me?" I was so shocked that I gasped. Everyone around us grew quiet as if they were listening to what I would say. My heart was beating so fast that I could barely breathe.

"Yes!" I squealed. He was full of relief. Everyone around us started to clap and a couple of people started to cheer. It made me blush. That was when it finally dawned on me, that we would always be together.

I don't know if I can take anymore of these sections. Each one makes me feel worse. Against my will I keep reading.

May 12, 2012

It's the night before my wedding and I can't sleep at all. I'm so nervous I don't know what to do. The thought is overwhelming. Tomorrow me and Roy will be married. I've dreamed of this day for years and I will finally know what it is tomorrow.

May 14, 2012

Yesterday was the big day. I couldn't write because I was so busy. All of our friends and families were here. We were married at the church and rented out a place

for our party. We introduced each other to our family and friends and even saw some of our old gang. It was truly a night to remember.

“That’s all she wrote,” I thought as I turned the page.

May 1, 2013

I’ve been feeling sick for a while so I decided to go to the doctors. The wait was long. When I finally got in, they did a series of tests. Then later on I found out I was diagnosed with cancer and I didn’t have much longer to live. There was nothing they could do. It was already too late to do anything. It was common in my family to have cancer. Most of my relatives had it but were much older when they were diagnosed. I was hoping not to have it but thought if I ever did, it would be much later on in life. The worst part was having to tell Roy. The horror on his face. He was so pale and though he rarely cried, I saw tears going down his face. It was the worst day of my life.

August 12, 2013

I am on my deathbed and I look like a ghost and feel like I am. I know my time is coming and I don’t know how to perceive it. Roy has stayed with me all day, everyday for the past week. Each day I feel the life and energy in me weaken. It’s only a matter of time.

That was the last entry. She died a few days later. Seeing all this again makes me feel lower than I’ve ever been. Then I go berserk. I slam my head on the table. I grab the first thing I see and throw it against the wall. When I see a knife on the counter I am tempted to just shove it through my chest and end my life here and now but I am too afraid to do it. Realizing I’d thrown Julia’s diary against the wall, I gently pick up the book. I notice a piece of paper where the diary had landed. Confused I pick it up. When I look at it I am shocked. It’s a handwritten

letter from Julia. The date shows it was written the day before she left to the hospital for the last time.

I quickly grab it and start to read.

Dear Roy,

If you are reading this I assume that I have already passed on. You are the only one I ever really loved. I have had the privilege to spend these last few years with you. I know that this is harder on you than it is for me but don't be discouraged. It's not the quantity of life you have, it's the quality. I may not have lived as long as I hoped but in the short time I have lived, I have done everything I ever wanted to in life. The best part was I got to do it with you. If I have passed, then please don't waste your life mourning over me. You have helped me to live life to the fullest but now its time for you to take the next step in your life. Please move on. I know it must be hard on you but I only want what's best for you. Even though we may be apart, I am always in your heart.

Your love,

Julia

I try to cry but no more tears come. The delicate item I hold is a burden. I fall down to my knees. My head is spinning. I'm so confused. Looking over it again I think of her last wishes. She wants me to move on and be happy. The problem is I don't know if I can. "I don't know what to do," I whisper to myself clinging onto the last shred of hope for recovery from Julia's absence. As I say this, I hear my father's voice. Unlike the first time we spoke, his voice is gentle. "Of course you do. You just need to be brave enough to do it."