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The Last Goodbye

Happy stories usually begin with the famous phrase ‘ Once upon a time ’ but if you came here to hear one of those stories then I suggest you stop reading now. Because this story is about the time my worst nightmare became a horrifying reality. I hate to be the breaker of uplifting stories but sometimes life isn’t a walk in the park like many say it is. I understand that everyone goes through a difficult time at some point in their life sometimes at a very young age. Here’s my story.

On April 1st of 2016 I thought it was the best day ever. I was hanging out with this boy that I really liked. He nearly had the whole package. He was super tall, handsome, funny, kind, a gentleman; he had a huge heart and always knew how to cheer me up. He would text me every night just to make sure I would go to sleep with a smile on my face. I was really falling for this boy especially on the day we shared. We didn’t do much but the day to me was all about the little things. We drove up to the very top of a hill in Tapanga Canyon while playing music. We watched how the sky changed from crystal blue to a beautiful blend of pink and orange. We got out the car and decided to walk along a hiking trail. It began to get cold and windy as the sunset let the dark night take over. As scary as the dark can be not only did I have the comfort of this boy holding my hand the rest of the way but there were dozens if not trillions of stars to light up

the sky. While making our way back to the car we laughed and talked almost endlessly. We both agreed that we did not want the night to end so we went to the nearby movie theater. Enjoying the reclining chairs and eating popcorn that left all our fingers oily from the butter. When the movie came to an end we checked the time; it was eleven at night. Both of us had a curfew of twelve so the boy sadly had to drive me home. Although we knew we soon would have to end our night we still managed to make the car ride back amusing. We danced to music, shared more laughs and talked each other's ears off. It felt so good to have someone to talk to, someone you know you can tell everything and anything to with no judgment, I felt safe. As we approached my very loud and busy street all the noise seemed to quiet down as he walked me to the front gate of my complex. We said goodnight to one another and I thanked him for such a fun night. He replied with "you're welcome" and kissed me before he walked back to his car. I walked all the way to my front door with a cheesy smile on my teenage face. I almost started to skip before I stopped myself because I felt a little too old to be skipping to express my joy. I took my house key out of my handbag and pushed the door open. All the lights were off and it was oddly quiet in my house. I shouted "Hello" but got no response. I shouted again "I'm home!" I began to walk away from the front door and walk down my long hallway. Passing by each room one by one. I stared into my empty living room that was quiet and dark; no one had sat on the couch and you could tell because there were no imprints. I peeked into my parent's room to see my mom sound asleep with only her bedside table lamp on. Passing by my kitchen it had seemed that my dad cooked dinner and then cleaned all the dishes or maybe no one stepped foot into the kitchen. Still with no lights on I headed towards my bedroom. As I turned on my lamps I heard distant laughter. My brother had some friends over and I could hear them talking in the garage and

making music with his turn tables. I decided not to bother them and figured I would see them all in the morning. I properly ended my night by brushing my teeth and washing my face and taking out my contacts, which then left me, blind to the world. My dad came home shortly after with both our dogs. I went to sleep feeling like the house had been a bit different. I continued to toss and turn in my bed with the thought of how did I have an amazing day and then almost stepped into a different dimension when I came home. Isn't a house supposed to feel warm and homey, because mine felt cold and as if I've never been there before. I eventually fell asleep but when I woke up the next day I immediately knew my house and family would never be the same.

I woke up to the sound of a loud scream. From being awake all night I was very tired and didn't get out of my bed till my mom ran in screeching, "He's dead, he's dead." I froze I thought maybe she's talking about the dog, so I didn't move. My mom shouts out to my dad "Alun!" I see my dad run down the hall as he yells "what, what!" Eventually my mom falls to the floor and I jump up to see what the chaos was all about. I walk into my brother's room that was right next to mine to see my dad and top of my brother giving him CPR and crying. In this moment everything in my body froze. I couldn't look away or run back to room it was if my feet were cemented into the floor. My dad demanded my mom to call the police. She ran to the phone with tears streaming down her face. I listened to her as she called them and said "Hello? Yes I need help I think my son may be dead." My feet some how become free and I walked calmly to my bedroom. I sat up on my bed and just had so many thoughts rushing through my head; I didn't understand how something like this could happen so fast. Just last night he was laughing with all his friends, I didn't understand. Sitting there on my bed I felt my cheeks getting wet as tears started to come down. My body started to shake and I say quietly "no, no, no!" I refused to

believe this could be the end of my nineteen-year-old brother's life. Shortly after I had a policeman asking me what my brother's name, and birthday was. But all I could respond with was "I don't know" how could I possibly answer any sort of questions right now. I called my two best family friends Daisy and Isi who I have known since birth. They came as soon as I called them, so did all the rest of their family. Soon enough my house was full of family friends and other authorities. I sat on that empty couch from last night with my dad and I explained to him how I didn't feel well. A different policeman told me I was going to be okay and that what I was feeling was shock running throughout my body. I walked outside to find many adults crying but they tried to keep it all in around me. Many of my neighbors came outside and stayed with my parents. My brother and I grew up in this neighborhood, everyone knew him. As I was outside a van pulled into my drive way and I knew exactly what it was. I ran back inside still very calm because I wanted to see my brother but doctors stood all around him trying to restart his heart. My ears filled with the beeping and pressing sounds against his naked chest, but nothing helped. My brother just continued to lie there. All the pigment in his skin had left and his lips had gone from pink and luscious to cold and purple. People pushed me out of the room to take me back outside. I stood with my friend's dad as a gurney was dragged into my house. My friend's dad tried to tell me without breaking down himself we both knew that Ben's body was about to be put into a body bag and onto that gurney and then into the van. He asked if I wanted to go for a walk so I wouldn't have to see it, but I exclaimed "No! I am staying here, I want to say goodbye." He didn't let go of my hand the whole time. I became alert when I heard my mom cry out "no, no, Ben! Bring him back! I want him back." This much heartache caused her to faint. Still holding my friend's dad hand he turned all the way around to look away as my brother's

body was brought outside my front door. He held my shoulder and whispered to me “ good girl, brave girl, you are strong.” I was the only one that seemed to be capable enough to watch my brothers body which was in a bag be put into a van, but I think it was because I didn’t believe he was actually in there. Everything to me felt like a real life nightmare. When the van drove off I began to cry and sit on the floor outside unable to lift myself up or go back inside. Isi and Daisy sat there with me and just held me as my body began to repeatedly shake. As much as I love my parents I didn’t feel comfortable sleeping in my own home, I kept thinking what if I heard him or woke up earlier then maybe he wouldn’t be gone. I took a week off school and slept at Isi’s house. During the week every morning we would go back to mine and the kitchen would be filled with new food, more food than we could eat in a week yet people still bought something or even cooked us dinner themselves. I always wondered was it out of pity or did they actually want to help us and be there for comfort. It felt nice to constantly have people around, but when I slept away from home for a week I returned with the feeling of loneliness.

All my blood related family live in England, but they all flew down here to be there for us during this difficult time. My aunt came the next morning after hearing the tragic new; she caught the red eye as soon as she could. After a week or less of the death of my brother we had a family viewing. I still hadn’t really cried to let out my suffering. Everyone that was there on the actual day of Ben’s passing had attended the viewing with us. I sat on a couch with Isi and Daisy as everyone else cried out loud inside the church. My dad walked out the door and walked over to me with a rose in his hand. He told me “ you don’t need to come in, I just need you to kiss this for me.” I at first didn’t know what the rose was for. I kissed the rose but told him I wanted to bring it in myself. We opened the big brown doors and I walked into this beautiful white church

to see everyone sitting down holding crumbled up pieces of tissue. Up ahead were my mom and aunt looking down into an open casket. I looked over with them and saw my handsome brother dressed in his favorite Hawaiian shirt with his arms placed gently on his chest with his eyes closed, I would never again see his twinkling green eyes. I kept thinking he was going to open his eyes. He looked very peaceful and almost happy. I placed the rose on top of him and walked right back out to sit on the couch with Isi and her aunt. Everyone started to leave and go back to my house for lunch. Yet my feet were cemented into the floor as well as my butt that felt like it was glued to the couch cushion. My aunt and my mom's two friends sat with me. My aunt gently asked me "are you ready to go yet sweetie?" I told her how I was scared to leave because once I left that would be it, I would never see my brother again. My mom's friend nicely asked me if I wanted to go back inside. I thought it would be a good idea but when I walked back to his casket I couldn't make it all the way. My feet stopped walking halfway down the aisle. My aunt couldn't face it once more so she looked away but still held my hand. I could tell everyone else wanted to leave so I walked right out again. Approaching the car park nearly killed me. I cried and cried and cried and sat on the floor. My mom's friend asked me if I told my brother I loved him, I shook my head in response. She walked me back inside and we both placed our hands on those tall brown doors and told Ben how much we loved him.

The drive back home was awfully quiet so I placed my headphones into my ears and looked outside the window thinking how happy everyone else in the world might be right now and I was there sitting feeling as if someone took a hammer and directly smashed my heart into thousands of pieces and I wondered how would I ever put it back together. When we returned back to my house everyone told me how proud he or she was of me for going back inside the

church. I knew I had to say goodbye is what I told them. After the family viewing we decided to have a memorial service where all of Ben's friends could attend. It was an amazing turn out! People from his elementary, high school and college came. We all wore Hawaiian shirts because that was literally all Ben wore and the shoe brand Vans. We had a dj play Ben's favorite song while we all ate his favorite foods. We had a book placed on a table where anyone could draw a picture, write a message, or talk about a memory and the things people wrote to my parents and I were so heart warming. Ben was so shy yet loved by so many and I don't think he ever knew that. Although the memorial service was outstanding, the next couple of days were stressful on my parents and I as we anxiously waited for the autopsy. The day we got it left us very sad yet hopeful. My brother had been struggling with lots of depression and social anxiety as well as the pressure of college. We find out that Ben had been buying xanax from a dealer off the streets, as his doctor would not prescribe them to him. And unfortunately Ben was unaware that the ones he bought had been laced with the deadly drug Fentanyl. This drug kills you in an instant of five minutes. We were relieved to know that Ben had not OD as way to kill himself but that it was an accident. Months went by and I often cried over thinking about all what ifs. I would text all my friends very upset and often relied on them and became distant with my parents. We all attended separate therapist as a way to cope. But for me the best medicine was writing how I felt. At night I would take out my phone and write in my notes even if it didn't make sense, I found it very therapeutic.

Now a year later I of course still miss my brother. I always will, but I have been honoring him as much as possible. At my sweet sixteen I was surprised by a montage made by my friends which contained pictures of my brother and I. After the film I said a speech and included my

brother in it and how I know he is still here. His presence will never go anywhere he is right by my side all the way. My brother is a butterfly; we see them everywhere so my parents and I are getting butterfly tattoos. My dad even built a website to spread awareness on the dangers of drugs and in hope that our story can help others. Looking back there is of course things I wish were different or that I could have helped with but what I went through was so dramatic and it made me so much more mature. The loss of my brother impacted me deeply and left me in pain but each day it gets a little easier. I have my mind set on my future and I know I will make my brother proud the whole way through my achievements. There are of course things my brother is going to miss out on, like my graduation and wedding. But I know he would not want me to let his absence affect all the happier things life has to offer. I have to look forward and never forget that he is standing there next to me.