Forged by Thunderstorms; Draped in Sunrises

By : Desiring Sunrises

Every time the night rises and clouds form in the skies, there is still a promise of a new day. Two friends find comfort in each other during their lowest points, emotionally.

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The thunder clapped loudly over the small apartment complex on the darkest night of the year. Well the darkest night of the year seen so far. It was only October after all and it was a guaranteed chance that there would be more dark days in the winter months to come. There at the window that was slightly ajar â enough to send a breeze through the room but closed enough so that the rain would not get in, a young man of 19 sat, his eyes trained on the scene in front of him. He observed everything from the soft "pit-pat" of the rain hitting the window pane, to the way the lightning that flashed often illuminated his face. Turning his attention away from the window for a moment he eyed the digital clock that was near the stereo.

"4:23 a.m." he said to himself softly "Perhaps I should be getting to bed soon"

Turning his attention back to the window he realized he wouldn't be getting any sleep that night. Shaking his head slightly he told himself that it was the fourth time in a row that week. He scoffed at his insomnia and leaned back in the chair he was sitting in, crossing his arms.

"Guess I'll be pulling another all-nighter. The guys are going to be really mad at me" he lamented to himself thinking of his roommates and their protection of him

He couldn't go to sleep even if he wanted to. Every time he shut his eyes visions of his mother and recently deceased friend would flash through his mind. Even when he did get the chance to sleep his dreams were plagued with them dying in his arms, begging him to save their lives. Needless to say every morning he'd wake up before the sun, dripped in a cold sweat. Yes it was much easier to not sleep and that is what he intended to do.

"I'll be fine" he began to tell himself "If I went this long without sleep than I can certainly go a few more days without it, or at least one more night."

He began to rock in his chair as memories of his beautiful mother and best friend came to him quickly. He found himself smiling at the memories and how they both always greeted him with a warm smile when he walked into a room they were occupying. As the memories continued he felt an icy cold feeling creep into his chest and felt the familiar prick of tears enter his eyes.

"It's still not fair" he found himself whispering "Not fair"

Shaking his head of his thoughts and quickly wiping his eyes he stood from his chair and walked towards the kitchen.

"Tea always helps clear my mind at night" he said to himself as he reached for the tea bags on the shelf of the cabinet "Yeah, I'll drink this and everything will be fine"

He smiled a bitter smile as he began boiling the water and dropping the tea bags in. Pulling a glass out of the same cabinet he rinsed it before sitting on the counter and swinging his legs impatiently.

"Okay, tea hurry up now" he told the inanimate object as he began swinging his legs furiously "I don't remember it taking this long last night"

His legs began to shake as he swung them at a quicker pace than before. Realizing what he was doing he let out a slight shriek and grasped his legs with his hands to keep them from shaking. He looked around quickly to see if anyone had seen him have his mini-seizure. Although there was no point everyone had been sleep long before that.

"I need to stop shaking, real men don't shake like this" he berated himself "At least no man I ever knew did"

Hearing the familiar sound of popping bubbles he looked up to see his tea boiling over and into the stove.

"Shit, shit, shit." he said as he turned the stove off and quietly searched the kitchen for something to clean the mess with.

After wiping the tea from the stove and the tiny droplets that hit the floor he began pouring his tea into the glass. He silently wondered if he should add sugar to the otherwise bitter liquid. Opting against it as he didn't want to create any more messes he began to sip his bitter tea softly.

"Ah, tea really does make everything better" he convinced himself as he continued to sip it

As he started to walk back to his chair at the window the thunder cackled louder than it had in the previous hours of that night and he jumped in surprise.

"Maybe I really should get to bed, or at least go to my room" he told himself as he began walking in the opposite direction

Pushing the door open slightly he laid eyes on his roommates. They were all snoring quite loudly and he knew that even if he wanted to sleep that night he wouldn't be able to with all of the noise they made. He then moved to the single bed in the corner by the window and for the third and perhaps most violent time that night the thunder boomed causing him to jump again albeit much more silently than before. Then he heard them the sound of soft sniffles coming from the room across the hall.

"I wonder who that is" he said as he moved across to the hall and pushing the door open slightly before walking in

Scanning the room he saw a figure resting on one bed facing the wall she was obviously asleep. Moving his eyes to the other bed he saw another figure facing the opposite wall however her shoulders heaved up and down slightly signaling her consciousness.

"Hey, you okay?" he asked her softly as he entered her room and put his hand on her shoulder lightly

"What the hell do you want?" she asked quickly her tough nature kicking in

"I heard you crying and I wanted to see what's wrong"

"I'm not crying" she replied moving farther to the wall "Now get out"

"Fine, I don't know why I came in here to help you in the first place" he stood to leave. He turned to face her "You know something, I don't know why you put on that tough-girl mask, but you're not a very good liar or pretender we all can see right through that"

"You're one to talk" she muttered to herself "Fine whatever you say just leave."

"What is with you" he asked loudly not minding the sleeping person just a few feet away from him

"Shhh. Keep your voice down do you not see her sleeping over there?"

"Huh?" he asked dumbfounded before turning his eyes to the other bed "Oh I'm sorry" he spoke to the sleeping form

"She can't hear you" the other girl muttered shaking her head "Idiot" she added under her breath

"You know I have good hearing" he replied sternly "I can hear what you're saying about me"

"Then you'd know I want you to leave" she turned away from him

"Fine, I'll go" he turned to make his departure

For the fourth time that night the thunder clapped causing the two conscious teenagers to jump. Deciding it would be best to hurry to bed he turned on his heels and began to leave when he heard her sniffle.

Returning to the bed he asked "Are you okay"

"J-just f-fine, nothing's wrong" she replied looking away from him

"You know itâ s okay to cry sometimes right. I do it all the time. Here have some of this" he told her giving her the tea he had been drinking.

"No you don't" she replied taking the cup "All you do is drink tea and stay up every night like an insomniac. But thanks for the tea anyway" she took a sip before gagging slightly

"Is something wrong with it, did it get cold?" he asked trying to take the tea from her

"No it's still warm. It's just a little bitter" she replied laughing softly

Remembering that he didn't put sugar in it responded "Yeah I'm sorry about that, I had already made a mess in the kitchen and I didn't want to make anymore."

"You made a mess in the kitchen?" she asked as he nodded "You know blondie's gonna get you for that" she took another sip cringing only slightly

"Yeah but I cleaned it up. He shouldn't notice" he replied looking at her sip the tea "Not so bitter anymore is it?" he asked laughing

"No not really" she continued to sip "But I don't want to drink all of your tea" she handed the cup back to him

"You kind of already did" he laughed "But I can make some more"

"Thank you, I'll help" she stood up and walked with him to the kitchen

Surveying the room she noticed the neglected chair sitting in front of the window. "You were watching the rain" she asked him with genuine curiosity

"Yeah, I usually sit on the roof at night, but tonight it was raining so I just chose to sit at the window" he began boiling the water

"You sit on the roof the whole night" she asked another question as she handed him the tea bags

"Yeah for the most part, I like the outdoors and the sunrise is beautiful."

"Maybe I could join you one morning, I don't see many sunrises because I sleep in"

"Yeah it's nice" he watched the tea boil "I could sit up there and draw all day, helps me clear my mind." he smirked "Well that and the tea" he handed her a full glass

"Thanks" she sipped it gingerly beginning to enjoy the bitterness in the taste "It seems like it stopped raining"

Looking outside he replied "Yeah you're right. That's good because now I can watch the sunrise"

Nodding her head she turned her attention to the clock "It's almost 6 a.m." she shook her head "I can't believe I stayed up this long talking"

He laughed slightly "Better than sulking I guess. Wanna go up?"

Nodding she replied "Yeah let's go"

Climbing the stairs with ease they opened the door revealing the roof and the growing sunrise. They gaped at the beauty as the pinks, yellows and oranges collided with the lingering gray clouds from the storm the night before.

"This is beautiful" she said staring with mouth agape "Now I see why you're up here every morning"

"Yeah" he replied softly walking towards the edge and taking a seat. Unbeknownst to him his legs had begun shaking violently again.

"You okay?" she asked gently as she followed and sat next to him

"Yeah, I'm fine" he said quickly as he took a sip of his tea "Just fine"

"Now who's pretending" she said nudging him slightly "I know something's wrong so tell me what's eating you"

He didn't reply just continued to watch the sunrise as images of his mother and friend flashed in front of him. She watched him carefully at his vacant expression. She then remembered the phone call he received a few days before. Thinking further she realized that night had been the last night he slept. "What was that phone call about" she asked him after working up the courage to pry

Pretending not to understand what she meant he asked "What phone call" his legs began to shake even more violently

"Don't play stupid with me" her tough-girl nature kicking in once more "The phone call you got a few days ago" noticing his legs she grasped them tightly to keep them from shaking

"It's nothing" he replied as he finally got his legs under control

"It had to have been something for you to have not slept at all since getting it." her anger grew "Now tell me what it was about"

"Like I said, it was nothing"

"Ugh, you're so infuriating. You talk all this shit about me being a pretender and actor when you're doing the same thing now." she stood and faced him "Why do you have to act like a child, why can't you just man up and-"

"MY BEST FRIEND'S DEAD" he yelled finally as he also stood up to face her "SHE COULDN'T RESIST HER ILLNESS ANYMORE AND SHE DIED" he hiccupped over his words "OKAY, SINCE YOU HAVE TO KNOW EVERYTHING." tears began to spill from his eyes "ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?"

She covered her mouth before replying "I'm sorry, I had no idea"

"I know. That's how I wanted it to be." he wiped the tears from his eyes although they threatened to spill some more "I don't need anyone's pity"

"You wouldn't have gotten pity" she tried to calm her voice as tears threatened to spill from her eyes also "We care about you, don't you think we'd be concerned that you never sleep and barely eat. Why didn't you tell us?"

"I didn't want anyone knowing. I can handle it on my own"

"We've all loss someone. That's why we all connect with each other. We could've helped you, we know how it feels."

"I've lost everyone" he began to drop to his knees "I have no one left, at least you guys have someone to see or go back to." the tears flowed freely now "I have no one"

"You have us, and we'll never leave you" she kneeled in front of him before hugging him close "Ever" she smiled lightly

Noticing her warm smile he smiled inwardly. She reminded him of his mother and friend. Smiling back at her he stood up and said "Well now that you know my big secret" he smirked at her "You have to tell me yours, that's a fair trade" he winked at her

"Nice try but you're not as good at bargaining as me. You should stick to telling stories" she smiled as she thought to herself. "But he does have the right to know"

Walking back to the edge and sitting she patted the spot next to her. Complying in her wishes he sat next to her and watched the growing sunrise when she began her story.

"I've always hated thunderstorms" she started as she recalled her past "When I was little every time I heard thunder I would cry and hide under my mother. She would wipe my eyes and then tell me funny stories about Thunder God's and loyal subjects. She'd tickle me and hold me close. Then after the storm was over she would take me outside and dance on the porch in her bare feet and proclaimed that's how the loyal subjects would dance when the Thunder God's blessed them with rain to help their crops grow. Her stories would always crack me up and I'd forget the sound of the scary Thunder and crackling lightning" she smiled reminiscing and then turned to him to make sure she still had his attention- she did. "Well one day I walked home from school and when I got home she wasn't there. I noticed she left a note on the table and it read 'Sweetie I'll be home

later. There are some snacks for you and your sister. Behave it will only be for a little while'. After I ate them I went to sleep. When I woke up it was dark and she still wasn't home. Then a thunderstorm hit and I immediately got scared. I ran to my sister's room and cuddled up to her. She held me but it didn't feel the same. There was no funny story or dancing. I wasn't scared anymore but I definitely wasn't happy."

After she paused for a minute or so he asked "So what happened after that"

"The doorbell rang then. My sister told me to stay in her room as she went to answer it. Not being one to follow orders I followed her and stood behind the corner so they couldn't see me. There was a police officer at the door and he was talking to my sister for a long time. I wasn't paying much attention until he said I'm sorry ma'am, but she's gone."

He gasped at her words, he knew what it felt like to lose a mother, it was the worst feeling in the world and his heart began to ache for her.

"Not believing what I heard I ran from behind the corner and screamed â YOU'RE LYING SHE'S NOT DEAD.â My sister yelled at me then and said â I TOLD YOU TO STAY IN MY ROOM.â It didn't help that she was yelling at me and it was still raining so I screamed back â NO HE'S LYING SHE'S NOT DEAD, SHE'S NOT.â My sister then dropped to her knees and hugged me tightly as I cried."

She felt tears slide down her face as she decided not to wipe them. Seeing her tears he pulled her close to him, wiped them and held her tightly.

"It was an accident." she continued to sniffle "She slid off the road. And for the longest time I blamed her for not paying attention, but I realize I was just angry. It wasn't her fault or anyone else's but that doesn't make it hurt any less."

He squeezed her tighter he knew exactly what that felt like.Watching the sun fully risen he said "Do you want to go back in?" she nodded in response

Walking back downstairs and into the apartment he followed her to her room. Noticing the now empty bed he said "Wow she gets up early"

"Yeah she does, I don't know what she does when she leaves though. She's very strange but I love her all the same" she laughed

Laughing with her he replied "Yeah all of our roommates are something." then looking at her he asked "So you okay now right?"

"Yeah I'm fine. And I'm going back to sleep now" she laid in her bed and cuddled into the pillow

"Okay." he began to walk away "I'll let you rest then"

Grabbing his arm she said quickly "Stay with me?" when she saw his raised eyebrow she continued with a smile "Another storm might come and I need someone to hold me and tell me funny stories"

Smiling back he said "Alright" as he lied down next to her he pulled her to his chest and squeezed her tighter than he had before.

"You know what" she said snuggling into him and yawning "You're a really good friend"

He kissed her softly on the forehead before replying "You too" he then began to yawn and shut his eyes. And for once he wasn't plagued with visions of his mother and best friend.

He pulled her even closer as she snuggled even closer to him. "She doesn't realize that I need her too" he thought before drifting into sleep

An hour later the blond haired 20 year old walked out of his room and into the kitchen to make breakfast. Noticing the mess that had been made he screamed in fury "I WILL KILL WHOEVER MESSED UP MY KITCHEN" he then collapsed in frustration.

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