

Stages of Grief

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It's hard to watch your best friend go through a hard time. Especially when you're the reason. AKA: Angsty McAngst Angst with a face.

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Zero: She was wonderful. Amazing, really. Always smiling and laughing. Seeing the good in people even when there wasn't any there to be found. She was his best friend. His light. He'd never been so close to someone. Yet alone, for so long. It'd always been the two of them. All their lives. Inseparable. That's the reason they chose to push it further in the first place. To cave into that desire to be a little more than just friends. And for a while there it was perfect. He wouldn't have asked for anything else. But then they got too deep. Too close for comfort. He was getting actual feelings. Serious ones. She had to go. This had to stop. He couldn't be allowed to get this close. Not with her. Never her. If something happened? If something came between the two of them? If he ended up letting out his temper on her- No. He ~~couldn't~~ wouldn't lose her. He couldn't imagine her not being there with him. Things had to go back to before. This wasn't right. They were perfect before. No responsibilities. No pressure. *No feelings*. Simple. Friends.

One: *One month.* She was the same. Same old best friend. Same wonderful girl. Like she had wiped it clear out of her memory bank. He was surprised really. He knew she wasn't one to cause a fuss, but he expected something. Anything. Usually she upright and left whoever upset her. Deleted their existence from her life. But this? Maybe she felt the same as him. She must have realized how important their friendship was worth saving. Their life was good, nothing had changed. They taught a few summer camps together, board games with the family, they even went out with friends a couple of times. One of those outings included his new girlfriend. He begged her not to invite her, for it just to be among good friends. But she insisted inviting her, desperately wanting to meet this girl he had been crushing on for years. "After all, I'm your best friend. I'm *supposed* to check her out." The two girls got along wonderful, no surprise there. Everything was good. He could relax. He had his friend back and no one was hurt in the process.

Two: *Two months.* She deleted her facebook today. Cut herself off from all contact to the outside world. He would see her briefly in the halls at church, but she seemed to be fond of taking the less beaten path. Away from watching eyes. He overheard her sister talking about how odd she was acting at home. That all she seemed to do anymore was sleep. Sleep and take long showers. One maybe two a day. Each one lasting two or three hours long. Even said once she caught her shaking horribly in her sleep, as if she was having a seizure or something. Mumbling something about 'No. Don't leave me. You can't leave me. Not you too. You're all I have left.' The two girls just thought it was a bad dream, he did too, for a while. Surely he wasn't the reasoning behind this, *she was fine*. Had said so herself.

Three: *Three Months.* Oh, Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. He was never one for Shakespeare, but man did Billy know what he was talking about. He couldn't have put it better himself. She never was one to deal with anger properly. Probably didn't know how to, now that he thought about it. Nothing bad enough had ever happened to give her a reason to be upset. Especially over a long period of time. It had started with glares and abrupt answers when he had stopped by her apartment. Then she stopped texting him all together. Wouldn't go hang out with and the rest of the gang. Not even a trip to the movies could coerce her to leave the apartment with them. When he asked what was going on, she simply replied she didn't want to hang out with anyone for a while, that she needed a break from reality. They had a tussle, words were said, and then she stopped acknowledging him all together. Cutting him off like all the others before him. He was worried. Still is. Asked a mutual friend to watch over her. Stay close. He should have known that arrangement wouldn't last long. He knew her as well he knew himself and vice versa. She didn't trust him. She must have known he'd eventually ask someone to watch her. To keep an eye on her when he couldn't. Hell, he'd asked her to do it with others plenty of times before. She never lashed out, looked like she was going to a couple times. Instead she cut all ties the two had left between them. He would have preferred the beating. Now he had no one to

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watch her. She was alone. He was losing her.

Four: Five Months. She's gone. She's completely out of his reach. He had stayed back like she asked, but he never heard another word from her. She isn't the same these days. It had been months since they last talked. Months since she had talked to anyone from her old life as far as he knew. Only a handful of close friends knew the two had gotten together in the first place, much less split up. Not even his own mother knew the two had stopped talking. That was until a couple of weeks ago. She had called his mom desperate for help. She had gotten sick. Hundred four fever. Sweat. Chills. Tears. Every movement bringing waves of pain. He thought it was shock again. Until his mom mentioned something about a kidney. She was refusing any sort of medical attention. Always so stubborn. Insisting that she'd ride out the storm like she always does. After her call, his mom instantly called him. Demanding to know why he hadn't called earlier, why he wasn't taking care of his 'best friend', why he hadn't forced her to go to the hospital. He of course, didn't have an answer to any of the questions. He talked to her roommate after she recovered, to see how she was doing, but it wasn't much better than before. The last few months she hadn't been eating and only slept two or three hours a night, if at all. As soon as she finished classes she would head to the gym to work out, nearly lost twenty pounds in three weeks. When she was around other people she would laugh and joke, but it wasn't the same laugh. It had no heart behind it. Just an empty sound. He tried to reach out to her, to ask her what was going on. How was life? Anything. But anything asked would just be replied with a cold heart shattering "leave me alone".

Five: Six Months. He saw her a couple times these last few months. She always had a guy wrapped around her arm. Different guy each time. They looked involved. Romantically, that was. He saw her leave the apartment several times and return the next morning. Same clothes, same make up, same bag. Her hair hastily pulled back in an attempt to be managed. It reminded him of the way she looked after those long nights spent in his apartment. Just the two of them and nothing else. But she had changed faces since then. This face was older, more worn out, haggard. Like it lived a million lifetimes in a week. She was losing an alarming amount of weight. Dangerously flirting with every thing that crossed her path. Taking rides from complete strangers. Was she sleeping around with all these guys he had seen her with? If she was, what else had changed? Drugs? Alcohol? She was messing with things she never would have touched before. He thought it was bad before, but this? This was *bad*. He had to confront her tell her what was going on. What she was doing wasn't right. But... he couldn't. He had no right to anymore. He had lost his chance.

Six: Eight Months. She's limping. Why is she limping? It's causing her obvious pain he can tell with each step from the look on her face. He was worried. That's why he was following her. He had to check on her. Go help her out. Something. Time had passed, they had never been apart for this long before. There was so many things he had wanted to share with her. Stories. Jokes. Theories. He just wanted to talk to his best friend. He missed her. He realized what he did was wrong. To just drop that bomb on her with no fair warning. He wanted to protect their relationship, but all he did was break it. It not only crashed her world, but changed his as well. Neither ending up better in the long run. She is coping though. She seems to be getting better. It was difficult to imagine after everything that had happened, but she was getting better. She's steadily dating one guy now, an alcoholic sure, but it's just *one* alcoholic. She reopened her facebook profile. She doesn't get on much, and she definitely isn't friends with him, but she participates. She even said thank you to his birthday message he left for her, but that was it. She was done with him. She'll relapse to the previous months every now and again. He can tell with the little things. Her walk less bouncy. Her voice not as bubbly. Pessimism, once a foreign concept, now taken root in her mind. Oh, but the smile... The smile that stretches from ear to ear, the one that shines through her eyes. That one's there. If only for a little glimpse, but it's there.

Seven: Ten Months. Alone. He was alone. Everyone... everyone was gone. He had lost several friends these last few months. Only a couple were left. He was angry. Mad at the world. Even had a row with his girlfriend. Even she even considered them that anymore. He had lashed out, but now he was weak and broken with no one to turn to. He had turned into a monster. He needed help. A friend. Someone. Anyone he could turn to. A year ago he would have hacked it out with a good buddy over a pizza and a coke. But now when trouble came

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he had nothing. Zero. Maybe he could- No. She wouldn't answer. She never did. But what if he- It wasn't worth the hurt. But she had changed. He changed. Now she was the one who was whole and he was the one who was broken. One little text couldn't hurt. Could it?

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