

The Loss They Never Warned Me About

They always prepare you for loss.

When you're a kid, they tell you about goldfish and dogs, about how time moves faster for them than it does for us. They warn you about grandparents, the ones with slow steps and soft hands, whose stories sound like echoes of a life you'll never fully understand. They even prepare you for the possibility of losing yourself—reminders to be careful, to stay away from danger, to avoid roads where headlights stretch like ghosts across the pavement.

But no one ever warns you about losing your best friend.

No one tells you what it's like to wake up and reach for your phone, half-expecting a message that isn't there. No one prepares you for the silence where late-night calls used to be, for the way a controller feels too light in your hands without them on the other end of the lobby.

No one tells you how grief isn't just a weight; it's a thief. It steals laughter from inside jokes that no longer have someone to share them. It robs songs of their melody, turning them into reminders of someone who should still be here. It takes the dreams you planned together and leaves them hollow, like blueprints for a house that will never be built.

Alex was never supposed to be a lesson in loss.

He was the guy who showed up. The one who stuck around through every hit life threw at me—Darvin, Kaylie, Cope. Every time, he was there, standing like an anchor when the world felt like shifting sand. When it felt like I had nothing left, Alex reminded me I still had him. And then I lost him.

Tyce understood in a way no one else could. He had lost his parents when he was just a kid, and it was Alex's family that took him in and made him their own. Alex and Tyce had been best friends since they were thirteen. Their bond was unshakable. If anyone knew what it felt like to lose Alex, it was him.

But even that wasn't enough to keep him here.

Now, they're both gone.

Some nights, without thinking, my hand moves on its own. I pull out my phone, open my contacts, and before I even realize what I'm doing, I'm staring at Tyce's name. Maybe it's muscle memory, maybe it's denial—I don't know. All I know is that for a split second, it feels normal. Like he's still here, still just a call away.

I want to tell him something dumb, something that doesn't matter, how work sucked today, how that song he once said reminded him of me came on, on my way home from work, It's nothing important, but it was always enough for us.

Before I can stop myself, I hit call.

It goes to voicemail.

"Hey, it's Tyce. Sorry, I can't get to the phone. Leave your name and number, and I'll call you back as I see fit." I almost laugh, because of course that's what he'd say. It's so him—sarcastic, slightly detached like the world could wait on his terms.

I don't hang up.

Instead, I sit there, listening, letting his voice fill the silence. Just hearing it again feels like standing in the sun after months of rain. Like for a second, he's still here. Still just out of reach, but close enough to touch. Then the beep comes, shattering the illusion.

They always prepare you for loss.

But no one ever tells you how to live with the way your heart still believes, for just a second, that they'll answer. No one prepares you for the way your chest tightens when you hear their voice, so real and so far away at the same time. No one tells you how it feels to want to leave a message, just to pretend for one more moment that they might call you back.

No one ever tells you how to keep moving forward when the people who made life worth it aren't moving with you.

No one ever tells you how grief lingers in the smallest moments. How it sneaks up on you in the quiet, in the seconds between distractions, in the spaces where they used to be.

No one tells you how many times you'll reach for your phone, how many times you'll hear their voice in a dream so vivid that waking up feels like losing them all over again.

No one tells you that moving forward doesn't mean leaving them behind. It just means learning to carry them differently,
in echoes of laughter,
in old voicemails,
in every part of you, they ever touched.

No one ever warns you that some people leave, but never really go.
No one warns you about the way you'll take time for granted, how you'll assume you have forever to say what needs to be said... until it's too late.

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