

Memories

The sun was setting over the faint line of the horizon, bending and distorting the shadows beside it. A faint hum of fireflies flickered off to the side, casting a warm glow over the fields — her home when she was younger. Daphne took in a deep breath. It was time to believe she could do it. It was time to believe she could make it.

It was time to believe in the power of childhood.

Grief was a powerful thing — fragile — not to be broken. Though untouchable, it could break souls and take away sanity. It was cruel, but only appeared when something nudged it — something that was so sad, so devastating — like death. The taking away of someone.

The stripping of the heart.

The loneliness.

And now, her father and mother were gone.

Daphne was lonely now. Indifferent to the world around her. It was like grief had taken away her world and cut off all communication to living things. But she wouldn't let that take away her happiness.

She fingered the tender walls, trying to smooth the peeling paint. The walls were once a pearly white, but now it was stained a mustard yellow. A flood of memories entered her mind sharply, though it was warm and tingly inside. Daphne reached to the doorknob, a dull silver hue. As the door opened, the noticeable creak made Daphne flinch. It used to be perfect.

Not anymore.

Her mother and father were photographers, meaning that they captured every moment in a click of a camera. Photo frames streamed across the walls, a painful reminder that there would be nothing to add. Daphne took a hesitant step. This was an adventure within itself.

It was an adventure through time.

She looked through the memories, one by one. *Her sitting by the fire with her father, playing with her dolls. Her mother's tasty food. The smell of cooked abalone and lobster and crab, all waiting for her. The twinkle of her father's ukelele. The spin of the pottery wheel, a hobby of her parents.*

She glanced at her old bed. Her old clock, which used to be blaringly loud, sat lopsided, frozen in time. 'Huh,' Daphne thought. *"It stopped at exactly 12 o'clock."* It was exceptionally strange as the second hand was carefully aligned with all of the other hands, creating a straight line. It was as though someone had opened the clock and moved all of the hands into a single line. Daphne's detective mind snapped into focus. *What if it was intentional?*

What if they wanted me to find something?

Daphne slowly followed the invisible line, pointed and guided by the clock, to her bookshelf. Her fairy tale books were still there, though something stuck out a bit. A scrap of yellowed paper was stuffed in between her two favourite books: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and Cinderella. Gently, she eased it out. Familiar handwriting was scrawled over the page.

It read:

To my beautiful Daphne,

I hope this letter finds you well.

I know that you will find this because you are my Daphne – smart and intelligent. I do realise that I most probably am gone by now, for you would need a reason to go to your old home.

In fact, this is the very reason I am writing to you. You musn't let grief take over you. You musn't let it take you away. You still have your brain. You still have your heart. You can heal. I'm not saying that you shouldn't mourn for people, I'm just saying that sometimes you have to accept some things. You can't change the fact that I'm gone. You can't change what has already happened. But you can change your attitude. Your life hasn't gone. So use it.

Please do not think of me as nagging you. I just want you to have the best life you can have. I don't want you to be ruined by me. I want you to be a strong young woman with love and compassion and the capacity to know when to stop. Never give up Daphne, but know when you are pushing the line. There is a thin line between pushing it and determination. Know your limits and break them if you have too. I know you can do it. I know you can because you are strong.

I know you can because you are smart.

I know you can because you are my Daphne.

Don't let others break you. We are always with you. In the stars, we are watching and caring for you, pushing the darkness away.

Yours,

Phillip and Martha, your loving parents.

Tears leaked out of her eyes, dripping onto the page, smudging the ink. She clutched the paper tightly and stared across the open sky. The sun had fallen beneath the clouds and the Earth had plundered into darkness. Only the twinkling stars provided light when it was dark.

Daphne took the note with her and left the house, standing still in the quiet night. A warm brush of wind swept her dark hair onto her shoulder as she looked up at the stars.

The stars were always with her in the darkest times.

The stars would guide her.

Daphne smiled silently. *"Perhaps after all the wondering and all the longing for an adventure, I never understood completely what an adventure was,"* Daphne thought, reflecting on her discovery. *"It wasn't all supposed to be swash-buckling pirates or damsels in distress. I've just had an adventure of my own. An adventure of identity is always so powerful."*

And Daphne left with a smile on her face and her father's words echoing in her mind.

...I know you can because you are strong. I know you can because you are smart. I know you can because you are my Daphne. Don't let others break you. We are always with you...