

Words I Never Got to Say

By Abigail Kwon

Based on “Every Last Word” written by Tamara Ireland Stone

I walk past all the gray, lifeless tombstones surrounding me. It’s almost been a year since I found out about Caroline's death. Sometimes I still think she's alive.

Soon, I reach Caroline's tombstone. The dull stone is partially covered in old dirt. I carefully set down my bouquet of bright pink tulips I bought for her and bring myself to sit down. I stare at her name carved into this old piece of rock as my mind travels back in time to when she was writing poems with me every day after school. Back when she was alive. Or at least when my brain had convinced me she was alive.

I visualize her cheeky smile and her t-shirts with the most unfunny but funny memes on them. I can remember one of them being *Free Shrugs*. I laugh at the thought of her wearing that as she would give one of the popular girls her death glare.

Suddenly, my mind brings back an old memory of me and Caroline. We’re sitting in the old, dark theater room at our school.

“I don't know how to express my thoughts in words, let alone a poem!” I say, clearly frustrated.

“Don’t think, just go.” She says.

“You know I can't just not think.”

“Like I said, don't think, just go.”

I remember her always saying that. It used to give me all the comfort in the world.

I sigh and start scribbling away in my yellow, beaten-up notebook. Eventually, I have three stanzas done, yet it doesn't feel quite right.

“This sucks,” I say rereading my work.

“What is it about?” Caroline asks without reading the poem.

I stay silent for a moment and then quietly mumble, “AJ.”

She smirks and leans in to read my messy handwriting.

“It’s not bad at all.” She pauses then continues. “It’s missing one thing though.”

“And that is?”

“Try to add a sentence that describes the poem's message. Maybe something that makes AJ so unique to you.”

Before I know it, the dim theater room starts to fade away, and I’m slapped in the face with reality. I feel tears start to fall down my cheeks, and soon enough I start sobbing, wiping away the tears although I know that more will fall anyway.

It stays like this until eventually, a subtle buzz starts vibrating through my shorts. I pull my phone from my pocket and see that AJ is calling me.

Crap.

AJ and I made plans this afternoon, but I completely forgot.

“Hello?” I say, sniffing, trying to get myself under control.

“Hey Sam, where are you? I’ve been waiting for thirty minutes.”

“AJ-” I say, my voice cracking a bit. “I’m so sorry. I completely forgot. I meant to drop off some flowers at Caroline’s grave, but I got caught up and I-”

“Sam.” I hear him say. “It’s okay. Don’t move. I’ll be there in five.”

The call ends and I go back to crying alone in this empty graveyard.

I keep letting the tears spill out, one after another until I hear slight rustling off in the distance. I look up and see AJ walking towards me.

“Sam?” He asks. He keeps walking until he’s only a couple of feet away from me. “Oh, Sam.” He kneels down and wraps his big, comforting arms around me.

We stay like this until the sun starts to set.

“I miss her,” I say, breaking the silence.

“Me too.”

Suddenly a soft voice whispers out to me from my left.

“I’m right here.”

I look to my left and see Caroline sitting neatly, both legs crossed.

I rush my hand out but pull back before I can touch her. I know better than to think she's real.

"You okay?" AJ asks.

"Yeah."

We continue watching the sunset, the pink and orange blending in the sky.

Thank you, Caroline. I'm doing better, I think to myself as I finally smile for the first time in a while.