

Six Feet Under

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“The last time he enjoyed the sunshine warmly kissing his cheeks on a cold winter day, the last time he cursed the birds chirping on his window on a Sunday morning because it was the only day he could sleep late, the last time his toes curled in the sand when the cool waves reached his feet, he didn’t know it would be the last.

Tomorrow he will not show up to work, he will not drop by the bar at lunch to get sustenance from some oily fries. He will not be home in the evening for dinner with his wife and kids. He will not stay late scrolling on his phone while the entire house is quiet in slumber.

We met at the diner around the corner from his office. It was the most ordinary Tuesday and he strolled in and sat beside me at the counter. He ordered ‘his usual’ - which in time I learned it was a big bucket of fries and a small coke to down the greasy food - and sat sulking while stuffing himself. I remember thinking he resembled a chipmunk.

I asked what was bothering him and he replied like it physically weighed him with only one word, ‘Life.’ I decided then that he needed a friend, and that I would be the best friend he would ever have. Curiously, I asked if he was a regular and he said yes, but just because it wasn’t a long distance from his office. So I became a regular too, my new friend needed me and I didn’t have the heart to leave him to fend for himself. In time I learned that he only ordered the fries because everything else in the diner was simply bland and fries are always a good choice.

I also learned about his job, which he hated, and his family, that he loved with all his heart. We bonded over the Jets and our mundane routines. I told him how I was planning to move back to Chicago to be close to my family, and he supported my decision, ‘Family is all we have’ he had said. We complained about our bosses and he invited me over a few times to a game of poker, he said he was really good and the rush it gave him took his mind off of life. Maybe my biggest regret is not going with him. I would’ve gotten the opportunity to see him happy for once, and maybe that could’ve been a good memory of him.

He didn’t know that he was important; he didn’t know he had to pay back to all the people that loved him with his presence. He always thought himself irrelevant and, I guess that’s where I failed him. As his best friend my only responsibility was to make him realize that he was worth millions, that he had to keep on living. That his family needed him and that depression was today’s new fashion and seeing a therapist wasn’t the end of the world. I should have stressed that not seeing one would eventually cost him his life. But now I know that I was no different from all who loved him, I was under the impression he was doing better, so I didn’t push. ‘He’s an adult’, I told myself, ‘he knows what he has to do’, and ‘He won’t leave his

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family behind'. I was wrong. He was fighting a battle and even though it cost him his life, he fought till the end, to that I can attest.

He will be dearly missed and forever loved and cherished. Rest in Peace my friend.”

By the time I finished my speech, my cheeks were tight from all the dried tears, my eyes still glassy and my throat dry. This was probably the hardest funeral I had had to attend in my entire life. Later I will blame it on his family watching me with adoration for the sublime memory of their father, lover and son.

As soon as I finished I quickly made an attempt to wipe my face with the back of my hand and made an exit. Anyone looking would see a forlorn man, almost unconsolable and clearly mourning someone he loved.

That means my drama lessons in high school were not for nothing, as I had thought when I was sixteen. I stayed in the background, hidden behind some trees. I had to make sure that he was six feet under before reporting back to my boss and catching the next flight to Florida, where my next task will take place. For this next one, I have to get creative, another suicide so soon would make a pattern, and I know better than that.