

Loss

written by

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EXT. POOL - DAY

People crowd a community pool. Chairs are filled and the water is so packed that no one can swim without touching another person. MADELYN, early 30's, blonde, wine-mom vibes, looks up from rubbing sun tan lotion on her legs. She scans the pool, then quickly runs over.

MADELYN

Ally? Ally!

Madelyn rushes to the edge of the pool. ALLY, ten, dark hair, wearing a pink swimsuit, pops out of the water and spits pool water at Madelyn. She laughs.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

Ally! You scared me! Don't you ever do that again, understood?

Ally rolls her eyes and swims away. Madelyn, shaking her head, returns to her poolside chair. She begins applying her lotion again, lathering her arms and stomach. Once finished, she looks up at the pool. Ally is not visible.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

Ally, I'm not playing this game again!

Ally does not respond. After mere moments, people begin to scream and run out from the pool. Madelyn pushes through the crowd. Something off screen makes her scream.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Tables and bins fill the church space. People flood in, organizing clothes and setting them in bins. A large banner stating "DONATION DRIVE" hangs from the ceiling. Madelyn, now with eyebags and a stern face, walks up to a table and sets a young girl's clothes, including a flower shirt, on a table in front of a VOLUNTEER (20's, in a blue polo.)

VOLUNTEER

Oh these are just too cute! You're sure you wanna donate them? These are nice clothes

MADELYN

Oh, yeah, sure. She's just outgrown them some. No point letting them go to waste, I guess.

VOLUNTEER

Aww! Well, thank you for donating.

Madelyn nods politely and exits the church. Her arms are crossed tightly around her stomach.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Madelyn walks with her head down, beelining towards her destination. Just for a moment, her head tilts to the side. She is in front of an elementary school. Children run out to the playground, laughing and running wild. Madelyn smiles. A LITTLE GIRL with a flower shirt spots her and waves. Madelyn's smile drops, and she continues walking.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Madelyn stops and sits at a bus stop. She checks her watch. RUTH, an elderly woman, sits by her.

RUTH
Headed home, Maddie?

MADELYN
Yeah. I've been out all day. I'm beat.

Ruth nods, and rests a hand on Madelyn's shoulder.

RUTH
Have you been eating well, honey?

MADELYN
Uh, yeah. I'm alright.

RUTH
Oh, dear, it's okay to not be.
Especially given your situation.
You know, when I lost my husband, I
couldn't get out of bed for a week!
You seem to be doing so well,
everything considered.

MADELYN
Yeah. Thanks.

RUTH
I mean, how tragic. You poor thing.
Just keep moving forward, alright?
Life doesn't stop for anyone.

Madelyn nods. A bus pulls up to the stop.

MADELYN
This one's me.

Madelyn stands and enters the bus.

INT. BUS - DAY

Madelyn rests her head on the window, scenery passing by. The sky begins to darken. Her reflection can be seen on the bus window, along with the reflection of two ladies, who stare at Madelyn as they whisper amongst themselves. LADY ONE, a woman with a bad bob, puts a hand over her heart and gasps. LADY TWO, who seems slightly younger, continues to whisper.

Madelyn whips around to stare back at them. They straighten up and pull away from each other just as she does. Madelyn scoffs, and pulls a wire above her head to stop the bus.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The sky is dark and gloomy. Madelyn walks briskly. She stops in front of an electronics store. A TV in the window plays the local news, displaying a story of a 10-year-old girl who drowned at the local pool. Madelyn slaps the window hard. It has no effect on the window. She rubs her hand and continues walking.

Rain drops begin to splatter on the sidewalk in front of her, then a downpour quickly begins. She hoists her jacket over her head to block the oncoming moisture. She approaches the steps to a townhome and takes a deep breath, then walks up.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Madelyn hangs her soaked jacket on the coat rack when she enters. She is damp from the rain, tracking water all over the floor. PETER, mid-30's, tall, dark hair with an unkempt beard, scrubs incessantly at a spot on the counter.

MADELYN

I'm home.

Madelyn enters the kitchenette and begins pouring herself a glass of wine. Peter does not look up from the counter.

PETER

You're drinking again?

MADELYN

You smoke.

Silence stretches between the pair. Madelyn takes her wine to a loveseat next to a window and sits, watching the rain. Peter stops his scrubbing.

PETER

Maddie, you're soaked.

MADELYN

I got caught in the rain.

PETER

I'll draw you a bath while I make dinner, okay? I love you. We don't have to talk tonight.

Madelyn sips her wine.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Peter leads Madelyn into the bathroom where a warm bath with candles has been set. He stands in the doorway.

PETER

Dinner will be ready in thirty, but take your time. You can tell me about your day when you're done, yeah?

Madelyn nods. She stares at the water and clutches herself tightly. In her bathrobe, she steps one hesitant toe into the tub. Her body jolts and she shakes her head, backing up into Peter.

MADELYN

I can't. Peter, I can't. The water. I can't get in the water.

Madelyn falls into him and begins to cry. He hold her tightly against his chest.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have let her! She was never a good swimmer. It's my fault. Oh god, she must have been so fucking scared.

Peter strokes Madelyn's hair and shushes her.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

I'm a horrible mother! God, am I even a mother anymore? Do I even count? My baby is dead, Peter, she's dead!

Peter wipes her tears and slowly guides her to the tub, settling her in. He washes her hair as she cries.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Madelyn and Peter sit at opposite ends of a dinner table. There are three chairs total. A serving bowl full of spaghetti sits on the center table, too much inside for just two people. Peter eats slowly while Madelyn pokes at her food.

PETER

Five bites, okay? Just give me five bites.

MADELYN

You made her favorite.

PETER

I know. Let's not waste, okay? Please just eat some. She would be so upset if she saw all this with no one eating it.

MADELYN

No. She'd say more for her and probably grab the whole serving bowl. Then she'd say, look mom! This is my serving!

Madelyn and Peter smile slightly. Madelyn tests a bite and, slowly chewing, is able to get the food down.

PETER

She was just the funniest. Oh, my god, do you remember when we got called into school the one time?

MADELYN

Yes! With the whole "may I use the bathroom?" thing!

PETER

She was so sassy. Smart, too. Just like her mother.

Madelyn laughs and takes another bite off her plate.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Madelyn washes dishes while Peter returns his attention to the stain on the counter.

PETER

I think grief is like a stain. I've been scrubbing this thing all day, and it just won't go away. But it's a stain, so I don't think it ever will. I can scrub all I want, but it's part of the counter now. Absorbed into the wood. I can paint over it, sure, but it'll always be there. Even if I don't notice it always.

MADELYN

Yeah. But we can always get new countertops. We can't get a second chance with her.

PETER

You get what I'm saying, though? That stain's always going to be there. There'll be days when we notice it and days when we don't, but it will always be there.

Peter takes a picture frame from the opposite end of the counter and sets it on top of the stain. Their daughter, ALLY, a 10-year-old girl dressed in a flower shirt, can be seen in the photo smiling wide and holding a cupcake.

PETER (CONT'D)

We'll miss her every day, and it won't get easier, but it'll become part of us. Something that's just there all the time.

Madelyn rests her head on Peter's shoulder. She rubs the picture with her thumb.

MADELYN

It hurts. I feel like I'm reminded of her all day, every day. People talk and stare, and it's like they're saying hey! There's that failed mother! The one who let her kid drown!

PETER

It's not your fault.

MADELYN

It is and isn't. The pool was so busy and she went so quick, but I let her leave my sight.

(MORE)

MADELYN (CONT'D)

For ten seconds, I let her leave my sight and now our daughter is gone. She just wanted to go swimming so badly.

PETER

She wouldn't blame you. No one blames you except yourself. Maddie, you're an amazing mother. We had the happiest, sweetest, most amazing kid on the planet and I know she didn't get any of that from me.

Madelyn looks down the hall to a closed bedroom door.

PETER (CONT'D)

Do you think you're ready to go in? It's okay if you can't.

MADELYN

I think I need to.

INT. ALLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Holding hands, Peter and Madelyn enter the bedroom. Stuffed animals and crayons litter the floor. A soccer ball sits atop a small desk. The bed is unmade and a bag of chips peaks out from the pillow. A neon sign reading "ALLY" hangs above the bed. Tentatively, Madelyn begins to pick up toys and put them in their rightful places. Peter sits on the unmade bed.

MADELYN

She was so messy.

PETER

She just loved playing. To her, it wasn't a mess.

Madelyn sits next to Peter and picks up a stuffed bunny.

MADELYN

I feel a little better. I think I needed this. I miss her mess.

Peter wraps a tight arm around Madelyn.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

I think you were right about the stains. Maybe. I feel okay right now but everything is still there. It's just quieter.

Madelyn and Peter lay back on the bed, the bunny held tight to Madelyn's chest. They huddle close and Peter turns off the light. The ceiling is covered with glow-in-the-dark stars.

MADELYN (CONT'D)

Do you believe in heaven?

PETER

I suppose so. Why?

MADELYN

Because it makes me feel better to
imagine her up in the stars.