

Mark

Mark leaned against the cold wall in the empty boy's locker room. He needed to get away from everyone. Everyone treated him like a fragile breakable item. He needed to smoke.

He felt himself relax as he took another hit of his vape. Mark held it in for a while to feel the smoke brush against his throat and lungs. He closed his eyes as he tried not to think, but Mark still had the images ingrained in his head. They won't leave him alone no matter how high or sober he is.

The second Mark stepped foot out of school he heard someone calling his name.

“Mark! Get your butt over here! We are going to head to our spot!” Lucas yelled.

“Mark,” Lucas said as he tackled him into a hug, “What the hell took you so long?”

“Lucas stop playing dumb you know why.”

“Oh be quiet Jae. Let me dream that he isn't vaping.”

“Hey, I'm not the one that brought him into the group and gave him the vape.”

“Jae! That is so mean,” Lucas said as he started to throw a hissy fit.

“Lucas if you don't stop I might just leave you here,” Mark said as he slowly started to walk away with Jae following.

They walked a few feet before Lucas decided to join them.

Johnny

Johnny looked at the building in front of him. Johnny's hands started to shake from how nervous he was. Life had to mess up before he could even graduate college.

Johnny took a few deep breaths before fixing his tie. He had images of going with his dad to buy his first job interview suit. Johnny snapped back to reality when he felt his phone buzz. He knew it wasn't anyone important because no one texted him anymore. Stepping into the building, he already wanted to run like hell out of the place.

Mark

Mark knew he was going to break and wanted to go home soon. He had thought meeting his friends would be fun, but his thoughts, the ones he tries to push away, came to the front of his mind. For a while, all he thought about was that it was his fault they're dead and reason they are buried 6 feet underground. If hadn't wanted to go see some dumb movie with them, they would still be here.

He told his friends some excuse that they probably heard a million times and started running home. He was running like the devil was behind him and ready to drag him down to hell. All he heard in his head was a taunting voice saying your fault, your fault, your fault.

By the time he got to the apartment complex, he could barely breathe. He didn't know if it was from the running or how panicked he was.

The moment he sat in the elevator, he broke. The sobs he was holding back broke free. He just wanted his parents to comfort him. They would put a blanket around him and his mom would make him hot chocolate while his dad would calm him down.

Johnny

As Johnny walked out of the building he knew he wasn't going to get the job. All because he said one dumb thing to the interviewer.

Johnny sighed and ran a hand through his hair now greasy from how many times he ran his fingers through it during the interview. He got his phone out and spaced out for a few seconds before he realized that he had his finger above his dad's number.

When he got home, he waved at the receptionist.

“Hey, you're Mark's brother right?”

Johnny frowned thinking that his brother did something dumb.

“Did he do something again, if so I am so sorry. I will tr-”

“No no, he did nothing wrong this time. I'm just a little worried about him. Today when he came back it looked like he was in a panic and didn't hear what I was saying.”

Johnny felt all the air in his body leave him and his heart fell through the floor. That is not like Mark, even this new person he is.

“Alright, I will check on him.”

On the elevator, he tried not to panic.

Once he got the apartment door open he started to call for Mark.

Mark

Mark doesn't fully remember how he got into the house but he knows that he is on the bathroom floor. He is still sobbing, but it is worse. He just wants everything to stop. He wanted to rewind time to that day so that he could still have them by his side.

He wants people to stop treating him like he is going to break and stop saying how sorry they are. They don't understand the shit he had to go through. They don't understand yet they still try to say they do. They say how they were in a similar situation when it was completely different.

He was so tempted to just ended it right here right now but he doesn't at the same time. He doesn't know what to do.

His thoughts were broken by Johnny calling his name. Mark tried to say something back all that came out was a whine mixed with a wheeze. Johnny must have heard it because the next thing he knew Johnny was bursting through the door.

“Mark,” Johnny said in a soft tone

Johnny sat down in front of him and started to rub his back.

“Hey Mark, you need to breathe,” Johnny said as he brought one of Mark's hands to his chest, “Follow me. Breathe in 1 2 3 4. Hold 1 2 3 4. Release 1 2 3 4.”

Johnny repeated that until Mark calmed down. Mark lifted his head and made eye contact with Johnny. Mark held it for a few seconds before he scoffed and looked away with an annoyed expression.

“What's the problem, Mark?”

“What's the problem?” Mark now turning his head back to look at Johnny, “The problem is that you going to tell me everything is going to be okay and that you ‘understand’ what I am going through, but you don't. You don't understand”

Mark felt his eyes start to water again. He hated this. He didn't want Johnny to see him like this.

“You didn’t see all the smoke that was coming out of the car. You didn’t see how bad they looked moments after it happened. You didn’t hear them trying to say they were going to make it through and try and be here.”

Mark looked Johnny in the eyes and felt his voice crack at the end.

“The thing is Mark I wasn’t going to say things are okay because they aren’t. They might not be okay right now but it doesn’t mean that they won’t be in the future. Also, I do kind of get what you are going through.”

Right as Johnny said that Mark felt ready to say no you don’t but Johnny beat him to it.

“I already know that you want to say no you don’t but I do,” Johnny paused for a few seconds before continuing, “The thing is you know how mom and dad were about to die when they were brought to the hospital. Well, they were awake for a little bit and told me they were going to pick me up so we could all see a movie together. They would die a few minutes later.”

Mark felt frozen. He didn’t know this. He didn’t know his parents were going to pick up Johnny. He let it settle in that Johnny might just understand what he feels.

“I’m sorry,” Mark heard himself say in a quiet voice.

Mark looked Johnny in the eye a few seconds later. Johnny started to smile a little even though he looked like he was going to cry. Johnny opened his arm a little and Mark tackled him.

They both lay on the floor in each other's arms.

At that moment Mark knew he was going to try to fix himself.

Johnny

It was a week after everything happened. Johnny watched as Mark would slowly change the way he is.

Johnny was reading a book while Mark was doing his phone. They started to do this as a way to just know the other is there for the person if they need them.

“Hey, Johnny? One of my friends asked me if I could go to the park and I wanted to ask you if I could go?”

Johnny was shocked.

“Of course, you can go Mark. I’m so glad that you asked.”

Mark turned to look at Johnny as if he was debating whether or not to do something.

“Hey, Johnny.”

“Mmm?”

“I’m sorry for not telling you stuff”

And just like that, he was gone. Johnny felt himself smile. This was great. He is finally opening up and telling him things. This was a start.