

Snapshots

Thoughtshots

Dialogue

### A Cure to Loneliness

*Friday, 8:36 pm - Elodie*

“Elodie, sweetheart,” it’s my mom checking on me for the third time this afternoon, “can I come in?”

“Sure, I’m just finishing up some homework,” I say with all the patience I can muster, because I know what’s coming next, and I’m so tired of this conversation.

“How are you?” she says, entering the room.

“I’m fine.”

“Breakups are hard, you can be honest with me,” she starts to stroke my hair as if I were going to cry, which I wasn’t.

“I promise I’m fine. Sam and I grew apart, we agreed that we’d be better off as friends, and I’m completely fine with that,” this is mostly a lie. We broke up because he was cheating on me with my best friend. The breakup was purely my decision. I am, however, fine, I never loved Sam, I don’t think I even liked him, I just dated him because everyone wanted me to.

“Ok, I’m here if you want to talk,” she says, getting up. She’s disappointed. She wants me to have a major breakup that causes me to stay in bed crying for 3 days straight. One where I would need her help.

As she exits the room she turns around, “Oh Elodie, I meant to tell you, your manager called me today, you booked a job in New Jersey!”

“Oh, that's great Mom,” I say, my hope to please her overriding my hate for modeling.

“I’m glad somebody finally wants you,” she says in a cheerful tone, leaving me to wonder how she can say something like that and not notice how offensive it sounds. She is always like this. She will say and do whatever she wants to without thinking of the effect it has on anyone else. I know she doesn’t mean to be rude, but I can’t ignore the pang of loneliness I feel in my chest. I feel like everything I do is for someone else, and never for me. Which always makes me wonder if I even know who I am.

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*Friday 8:41pm - Harley*

“God damn it,” I hear from downstairs accompanied by the sound of crashing glass and loud footsteps shuffling around below me, “Harley! Down here!”

I breathe in sharply before responding, “Coming mom.”

I hurry down the carpeted stairs to find my mom standing behind a puddle of burgundy wine, spreading further and further across the floor, the glass shards reflecting the crappy light above the counter.

My mom is rarely home, but when she is, she’s drinking, and when she’s drinking she’s rude.

“Clean this up,” she says, slurring slightly, and pours herself another full glass of wine.

“Got it,” I tell her. I’ve tried for 16 years to convince her to stop drinking, which obviously hasn’t worked, so all I can wish for anymore is for the day I move out of this apartment to come sooner.

“I’ll,” she pauses to take a long sip from her glass, “Be upstairs,”

It's when she starts to make her way up the stairs that I pull out rags, and soak up the mess.

It took me a while to clean it up, and by the end it looks like I picked a bouquet of roses with a very unsteady hand. All the small pieces of glass seemed almost invisible.

As I start to clean the little cuts on my hand, I glance at the clock, realizing it's already 10. The pressure behind my eyes appears, and I find myself crying silently, with no one there to comfort me.

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*Monday, 8:15am - Elodie*

School has always been difficult. I have to make sure that I'm getting good grades, that my teachers and classmates like me, and (I know how cringey this sounds, but) staying cool. Today it's going to be harder though, because I'm pretty sure everyone is aware that Sam and I - the king and queen of the school - have broken up.

As I walk through the doors of the school building, I'm getting so much more attention than I expected, and not in a good way. I feel stink eyes from every direction, and whispers: some that I hear, and some I know I don't want to. It all makes me want to throw up, or run out of the building, or curl up into a ball. Anything other than imagining the rumors Sam is spreading about me, which - knowing him - are far from the truth. Instead, I choose to ignore everything and walk calmly to class.

I make it through most of the day, but it's in English class when I hear Amara and Roxanne, the gossip girls of the school, whispering behind me.

“Did you hear Elodie hooked up with 4 other guys during their relationship?”

“Eww, I’m honestly not surprised. Poor Sam, he must be heartbroken!”

It’s the last part that gets me. Poor Sam? I’m so angry at Amara, Roxanne, Sam, my mom, and everyone in this stupid school. I have tried my whole life to be perfect. To make sure that no one will hate me. I have dated the dumbest man on this planet for 18 months because everyone wanted me to. I have pretended to be someone I’m not for 16 whole years so that everyone else is happy. But now Sam turns me into some villain that broke his heart without a care in the world, and everyone believes him.

I storm out of the classroom. I’m done with being the perfect child. All I want anymore is someone who actually cares about me; not the person they want me to be.

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*Monday, 11:38- Harley*

The greatest part of the day has finally arrived. My glorious lunch period. I already made my way through the crowded hallway to the back of the school, where I always sit on the patch of shaded grass underneath the cherry blossom tree. It is the ideal spot for lunch since I don’t have to listen to the yelling of students across the cafeteria, and see the pitiful looks people throw at me when they see that I am seated alone at a table reading a book.

I set my bag down and breathe in the earthy aroma that makes me love this spot even more. As soon as I sit down and pull out my computer, I hear the door swiftly open and Elodie Young (who has probably gotten invited to every single table in the cafeteria) dashes out, her

eyebrows furrowed, and her cheeks rosy. I continue to watch her as she throws her bag down with a small thud, before falling onto the bench, angry tears running down her face.

I can't tell whether I should mind my own business, or go and check on her, but after about a minute I decide that if I were in her position, I would want someone to show me they care. And who knows, maybe she, by any chance, is looking for a new friend.

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*25 years later - Julietta*

"Momma, before I go to bed, can you tell me a story?" I ask. It's my sixth birthday, so I know she can't turn it down.

"Of course!" she says and lays down next to me, "Which story?"

"Um..." I love listening to her stories, so it takes me a while to decide, "How did you and Mommy meet?"

"Ohhh," she sighs and starts rubbing my back in soft circles that makes my eyelids get heavy, "Well, we went to high school together, but we didn't know each other very well. We probably had a couple classes together but we never talked. I was - we had different groups of friends. Just like you and Mira are friends, and other kids in your class have other friends."

"Like Cleo and Lucas?"

"Exactly!" and she starts to continue her story, "But one day, I was having some friendship troubles, just like what happened with you and Abby last year."

"And we're still friends, Momma, because Ms. Anna made a resolution circle."

“Yeah, but I didn’t do as good a job as you to resolve that. Mommy was kind to me though, and she made me feel happier and loved, just like how you make me feel every day. And she showed me that family can be more than just blood. You, me, Mommy, and Leo are all family, even if our outside doesn’t show it.”

“I love you, Momma,” I say, my eyes starting to close like magnets urging me to fall asleep.

“I love you too Julie,” she says back I start to drift off, in the background I hear her say something to Mommy,

“I love you, Harley, you make me the happiest person ever.”

“I love you too, El, more than you could ever imagine.”