The Choice

*Whoops. Looks like Doc Choi is calling for me. I’m just gonna talk to her for a second alright? I’ll be right back sweetie. Love you.*

Juliette lay in her bed, watching as her lover made his way to the door, closing it gently on his exit. Once again, she was alone with no Jacob Sampson to keep her company. Alone. This hospital room had been her home for little over a year now. At least what she assumed was a year. Time seemed to pass unnaturally fast in the hospital and keeping track of time was painfully hard when you were stuck in the same room for what felt like eternity. It had been so long since she had seen the outside world. Her wonderfully scenic view of this room was of a small screen mounted in front of her face and a small table with flowers changed daily by the hospital staff. It seemed those flowers were the only thing that changed in the room. Same old wall. Same old room. Same old monotonous beeping that ticked day in and day out. Humans get tired of seeing the same things day in and day out. It wears us down mentally. Habit gets us too accustomed to the familiar that something as small as a fly buzzing around on the wall was as magical as the New Year’s countdown at Times Square. Funny how the simplest things in life were the ones that we miss the most when they’re gone.

*Heya’ Doc Choi.*

*Hello Mister Sampson. You look particularly jolly today, as per the norm.*

*You betcha. The family doing well? Robert and Joseph are heading to…middle school now right?*

*Yes they are. My little rascals are growing up. Always too busy to spend time with mommy now.*

*Kids will do that to ya, hah hah hah. Well it’s all about learning to let go and not restraining them right? So Doc. You called me out here, what’s the news?*

*Nothing new for you unfortunately Mister Sampson. Everything’s the same since last week, and the week before that, and the week before* that*.*

*Yeah, well, it never hurts to check right? Yeah. Well, I better get back to talking to the young missus, you know she doesn’t like to be kept waiting.*

*… Mister Sampson?*

*Yeah?*

*… We need to talk.*

Just a year ago she was eating homemade sandwiches on summer afternoons, sitting by the waterfront. It was so damn beautiful; in her eyes at least. She could still remember the scent of the shoreline, the way it managed to offer something new and familiar every time, whether it be the scent of a family grilling sausages for their Barbeque or the stench of seaweed building up on the rocks. It was utterly unpredictable and absolutely gorgeous.

She could remember walking down the wooden planks with Jacob, their hands interlocking as they tried walking in sync with each other, laughing and stumbling as they tried to confuse each other.

Jacob. Just thinking about those memories made her think of him. He looked like any average joe you could pluck off the street, and yet, he exuded this sort of vibe that differentiated himself from everyone else. It was the small things like that little spring in his step or how he always wore only one earbud when he was listening to music. He was oddly original in a way she just couldn’t put her finger on. And his voice. His voice was so nice. So simple and direct and pure. It had this crispness in it, as if his voice was the result of one night stand between a peppy television host and a small town kid edging off the suburbs. Gosh. And his face? Man oh man. The sheer intensity of his eyes when they were focussed, the way his lips curved up whenever he pronounced the *heh* sound, and that little smile that creeped from his lips when he talked. He was absolutely precious.

After the *accident,* many people came to visit her. In hindsight, Juliette agreed that she was much more popular now than before. It seemed as if sickness and mental disabilities were an instant popularity badge. When these visitors walked into the room all they saw was a statue, eyes pried open and never-ending, but inside, a mind continued to wander on. Suckers. They’d never know about her dirty little secret.

 If there was one benefit to this whole incident, it was that she really had the time to analyze things and learn to take things in their entirety. The tiniest imperfections were easily visible to her now. She got really good at doing that. She couldn’t wait to use these newfound skills when she was cured.

*I knew there was something! I could see it in your face when I walked out. So, what’s the skimmy?*

*Mister Sampson, it has been a very long year of procedures and work.*

*Yeah, you and your team are very dedicated. Thank you for your continued assistance in this.*

*Of course Mister Sampson. We have nothing but compassion for you and your “significant other”. It is an honour for us to be in charge of such an operation. However, we need to discuss things. Very important things…*

It wasn’t until now that she saw what a dedicated and caring guy Jacob was. Hell, at first she thought he was going to be nothing more than a loser just looking for a girl to satisfy his fragile masculinity. The thing is, when a guy shows up the day after your first date with the invitation to a movie, it’s sort of hard to decline.

*Whatcha’ mean Doc? Need me to pay for more medicine or supplies? Just say the word and I’ll get the chequebook out.*

*… Mister Sampson. I…I don’t think we can continue activities on the life support of Juliette.*

Juliette remembered everything as vividly as if it had just happened yesterday. The blinding light. The screech of tires on asphalt. A titanium fist slamming into her gut. She remembered waking and being crumpled up in a hive of metal and wires, Jacob trying to fish her out amidst the jungle of bent steel and cut plastic. He was yelling at her to move. To get out of the wreckage and get to safety. She remembered trying with all her might, but her legs and arms failed to go anywhere. They just wouldn’t work. Nothing worked. She couldn’t even close her eyes. All she could do was watch, as her lover reached into the mess and pulled her out.

*Woah there! What do you mean suspend activities on Juliette? Are you thinking of pulling the plug? Have you gone insane?!?*

*Mister Sampson. You need to understand. She’s barely conscious: let alone alive. It’s been a year of intense treatment, yet extensive damage to her body and brain is showing no signs of renewal. It just isn’t possible to walk away from an accident like that without any damage.*

*We don’t know that! You saw the results from her Stimulus Tests! You were there. Watching the screen, just like me. You know her Doc. You’ve known her since day one, since you helped me wheel her in here. In that room is a beautiful young girl that has lived life to its fullest. She can still feel, she can still hear me. She might not show but she knows. I* know *she knows.*

*Damn it Mister Sampson! You think I want this to happen? We’ve done the tests. We’ve consulted the research. She doesn’t respond to any stimulation in the mind or body. We have tried tapping into her nerves and brain so many times we’ve basically injected her with a form of consciousness. We have done everything in our power to save her. And still, she remains unreactive to everything. There are people out there that are dying and need this hospital for aid. We can’t pump more resources and energy into a lost cause. There’s nothing we…I can do.*

*I know what I said! But, she’s alive damn it!*

*Mister Sampson. This pains me as much as it will pain you… but you need to let her go.*

*What?*

*You need to let her go.*

*Doc…would you close the door on a loved one?*

*Mister Sampson…*

*Answer my damn question! Would you close the door on a loved one?*

*…*

*Exactly, so don’t you* dare *close the door on mine!*

It had been a while since Jacob had left to talk to Doctor Choi. Perhaps they were discussing a possible remedy for her predicament. She could wait.

*Mister Sampson, I’m not talking as a doctor. I am talking as your friend. You need to let her go. Look at her. Think of the anguish she must be going through. Living in that same spot attached to that horrible machine all day. Do you think that’s a life she would have wanted to live?*

*But, Juliette…*

*I know that it’s hard Jacob. It’s never easy to do something like this. Do you know how much it hurts for me to say this? But you need to think about what Juliette would want. Is that really the life you want for her? Forced to exist without truly living, solely so you can keep her in your life? Loving someone means knowing when to let go. She has no family left. You’re the only one who can legally make the choice. It’s up to you Jacob.*

Juliette saw Jacob as he walked through the door, clutching the door handle with a locked grip. He eyes looked red and veiny, he probably itched them too hard again. Doctor Choi quickly followed suit, removing the familiar blue IV drip bag, and beginning to inject some liquid into another. That’s odd, they only used the red Propofol bags when she was getting blood transfusions or in the middle of a procedure. Perhaps Doctor Choi was told by Doctor Richards to do something. Whatever they’re doing must be important she thought, watching as Doctor Choi replaced the red bag to its rightful place and felt the rush of medicine as it seeped its way into into her blood stream. She could feel her mind became duller, her reaction slower, and her vision fuzzier. Juliette watched as Jacob got closer to her face, the giddiness rising from inside of her simply at the sight of him. Finally they would be together again.

She felt his touch as he soothingly touched her cheeks, the warmth of his hands spreading over her face like wildfire. She got goose bumps simply from the contact. She wished she could reach out and return the favour, snuggling his face closer to her own. To be able to nuzzle his hair, to talk to him about his life. She couldn’t wait to tell him about all the things she had been holding inside. A tear trickled down from his eye onto her cheek.

*I love you so much Juliette. So much. More than words can describe.*

‘I love you too you enormous sweetheart,’ she replied. ‘One day, when I get out of this, we’ll be able to talk and do everything we ever wanted to do again. We’ll talk, we’ll eat, and we’ll live. I can’t wait to do it all. And the best thing is that I’ll be able to do it all with-

The End

(1913 Words)