

Sometimes, All You Need is A Little Bit of Hope

By Amy Yan

I don't know what I'm doing sitting here, in front of my computer. I know I won't type anything. She was what motivated me. And now she's gone. I can still hear her voice, telling me, "Julia, you may not have much to present to the community right now, but I know this book is going to be a hit! Remember, 'Hope is being able to see light-'"

"Despite all of the darkness," I finish the quote, as if I really was talking to her, knowing it because of just how many times Amanda had said it. In fact, she had said it so many times that I started getting annoyed. But now I would give anything to hear my sister say it again, just one more time.

"Come on! Let's go on this one first!" I dragged Amanda to the ride, Millenium Force.

"This one looks so scary, though!"

"Suck it up, Amanda! You'll be fine." I said, punching Amanda's arm playfully. We stood there for a while, talking, waiting in line.

"Excuse me? Do you know if this ride is scary? I haven't been on it before. My brother doesn't want to ride it with me, and I'm scared to go on by myself." A little girl around the age of 8 was standing there looking up at us with a mix of excitement and nervousness.

"Oh, I'll go with you." Amanda said, smiling at the girl. "It's my first time, too, so we can find out together."

The little girl beamed with happiness and stood right next to Amanda, still smiling. And kindness was only one of Amanda's traits.

The door to my apartment opens and in comes my roommate/best friend, Kylie.

"I brought food!!" She shouts to me, waving a box of pizza at me, my favorite.

"I'm not hungry." I say, it's only been 2 weeks since Amanda left, and I haven't gone out a single time since the funeral.

"Girl, this is not healthy. You need to learn to let her go. You're sad, and I get it, but that doesn't mean you should stay cooped up in here staring at an empty page on a google doc. We need to get out and do something fun together." She gives me a sympathetic smile and pleading eyes.

"Fine. Just one night though. And then I'm coming back to the apartment 'staring at an empty page on a google doc.'" jokingly mocking her. When I'm sad, besides Amanda, Kylie is the only one who can still make me smile and laugh.

It was a warm night, but I could still feel the cold breeze on my neck. I breathed in the fresh air.

"Where are we going?" I asked as I hopped into the passenger seat of Kylie's Honda Civic.

"You'll see," that mischievous girl put on her best evil smile, and I immediately thought of the Grinch. I rolled my eyes, but I was already happier compared to when I sat in front of my desk, not doing anything, only eating frozen mac 'n' cheese for all of my meals.

A few minutes before we arrived, Kylie told me, "Okay Julia. Close your eyes, I'll tell you when we get there."

A while later, I heard the car sputter to a stop, and Kylie got out of the car. She came over to my side and helped me out.

"Three, two, one. Open your eyes."

I opened my eyes. At first, all I could see was blinding lights, but I quickly recognized the place. The carnival.

It was my favorite place.

"Race you." I said, taking off running.

"Hey! That's not fair, you started first!!" Kylie shouted, laughing.

"Here are your tickets. Have a great day." The lady in the booth spoke in a monotone voice, looking very tired and bored.

"Come on! Let's go on this ride first!" Kylie pulled me to the line of Millenium Force. I instantly started having nostalgia. I started rethinking my decision to come here.

"What's wrong? I thought you liked this one." Kylie asked, questioningly. I snapped back to reality.

"Oh, um.. It's just because Amanda liked it, too." Kylie gave me a comforting smile and I couldn't help smiling back.

"Then we can ride it for Amanda!" I sucked up a breath and shook my head. I felt sick, as if I already rode the roller coaster.

"I don't know. It was a bad idea coming here. Let's just go back." Kylie frowned but seemed to understand.

"Okay, that's fine. We can just come another time."

I nodded, feeling bad that I wanted to turn back when we had just got here. And I mean, I have to eventually get over Amanda's death. I can't stay inside sulking for the rest of my life.

I drove along the familiar roads back home. The same cracks in the road, the same speed limit signs. It was all the same, except that Amanda wasn't in the car with us. I couldn't stand it anymore. Even if Amanda was a big part of my life, I have to get on with it. Time won't stop for me. I U-turned at the next green light, and Kylie immediately lit up.

"I knew that you had it in yourself."

"I know that Amanda wants me to be happy."

We turned right back around and right back to the same exact carnival and walked on the same exact sidewalk until we were standing in front of Millenium Force again.

I felt a small tug on my shirt. I turned around to see a cute little girl with brown curls and green eyes.

"Can you ride with me? My mommy doesn't feel good and so she doesn't want to ride a roller coaster right now. I really want to go though!" I instantly thought of that time I came with Amanda.

"Aww, of course!" We instantly broke into conversation, the girl told me her name was Addie. Addie reminded me of Amanda. The same witty jokes, the same sparkling gleam on her face, lighting up the room wherever she went.

The next morning, I woke up with a smile on my face. I had so much fun last night, and I finally knew what to write about. I didn't stay inside anymore. Instead, I met with old friends for coffee. I went on a shopping spree with Kylie. I even went through Amanda's stuff. The next day, I stayed in front of my computer almost the whole day, but I actually had something to write about this time. Plus, I wasn't in my big sweatshirt and pajama pants only getting up to use the bathroom anymore. I felt more alive and happy.

The following 2 months, I returned to my old lifestyle. Hang out with friends every weekend, and try to find inspiration for writing on the weekdays. However, I already had many ideas for my book. I'd written many before, but I was never able to get them published. No matter how hard I tried. This book though, I absolutely had to get it published. I needed to share these thoughts. I wanted more than anything for it to be published. I reached out to many different publishers, only to receive an email many weeks later that they weren't interested.

I opened the 23rd email from the 23rd publisher. I closed my eyes, opened the email, and opened my eyes, wincing. I took a deep breath and sighed. The big fat letters of the sentence, "We are simply not interested in publishing your book, although it's a great piece."

Kylie always kept my hopes up though, saying, "Remember, hope is being able to see light despite all of the darkness."

I was still extremely sad, though. I was lost like I had to find my way through the Labyrinth. I felt as if I was letting Amanda down. I couldn't do that. I couldn't give up hope. After all, Dr. Seuss wasn't able to get his first book, And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street, published, until he contacted the 28th publisher.

I got my friends to read my book and they gave me feedback. I added more description and some figurative language. I reached out to more publishers. Each email back was the tiniest step forward or the tiniest step backward. This was the last publisher I could find. Every notification I got, I checked my phone. Three months passed, and the email never came in.

"Julia! Somebody emailed you!" Kylie called from the kitchen.

"Will you bring my phone over here?" I said, my eyes glued to the TV, watching my favorite show. Of course, I was sad that my book won't be able to be read by the public, but I can't be sad all the time anymore.

"Sure thing. It's some person named," she hesitated with an odd expression on her face, "Eleanor Carter. Why does she sound so familiar?" I shot up as soon as she said those two words.

"Wait seriously?" I felt an urge of excitement. "Open it! Open it!"

Kylie looked at my phone and instantly grinned.

"Did she say that she's going to publish my book?" I asked frantically and winced when Kylie started talking.

"Maybe." Kylie smiled mysteriously.

"Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh! Eleanor Carter wants to publish my book! My book!" I emphasized 'my', as if it was impossible. But at this point, it had felt impossible. I squeezed Kylie in a tight hug. "Thank you for always being here for me."

"Of course, anything for my best friend."

"So, are you going to tell me what this book is about?"

"You'll find out." I said smiling. Kylie playfully pushed me.

"Hey! That's not fair!"

I was admiring the sunset out on the balcony when a sparrow landed right next to me. Sparrows were Amanda's favorite bird. I never really understood why, but she just seemed to have some connection with them.

"Hi birdie, how are you today?" I talked to the sparrow as if the bird was a human and he knew what I was saying. He cocked his head to the side in a familiar way. I smiled, realizing that it was in a way Amanda did it. It could have been a coincidence, but I was convinced that Amanda was sending me a message.

I believe that even when your loved ones aren't physically with you anymore, they're still always with you, in your heart. They'll still be watching over you from heaven, making sure you're safe, making sure you're happy.

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