

THE JUMP

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PROLOGUE

'The way I see it, everyone is alone. It doesn't matter if you speak to a thousand people on a daily basis because frankly that's not really you but a cover to hide who you really are. The real you, on the other hand, is kept in the dark and isolated, never spoken of by others.

I know this because I'm a prime example of someone who hides who they really are. My true self withers senselessly in a labyrinth, hard to find even by myself. I don't know who I am. It's what brings me to where I am right now, sitting in my room writing this note. I'm clueless as to why I'm alive, what is my existence benefitting to anyone in my life?

I love my family: mum, dad and Chloe; you guys are the reason I'm leaving a note rather than disappearing without any explanation. This isn't any of your faults so when I'm gone, my only wish is for you not to blame yourselves for this.

I know I'm weak for leaving in this matter. I'm sorry, I really am. I just couldn't handle the pressure put on me by others, and I'm scared about what would happen if I continued living. I've made so many mistakes that I can't make up for, I'm a horrible person.

Mum... dad... Or whoever is reading this, tell Lethia I'm sorry, I didn't mean for things to turn out how they did. If there was one thing I could redo in my life, it would be to never leave your side or conform into a group of people who weren't even my friends. I'm sorry for making your last year of high school a nightmare.

Chloe, you've been begging for my bike for years, so when I'm gone I'm passing that onto you. I have a jar of money that I was saving up to buy a car but that's not going to happen. Mum and dad I'd like you to take it, I hope that'd help pay for the funeral a bit.

And for you Lethia, I'm giving back what you gifted me in 7th grade. It meant the world to me, and I hope it would mean the same to you. All I can give you is that, and my sincere apologies. Please forgive me.

I love all of you, but this is something that needs to be done. I am sorry.

~Tia Lastor'

I put my pen down and folded the note, placing it gently on my bed. I glanced at the clock on my bedside table, 3:47 am. I should have left by now, but there's still so much to say goodbye to. For instance, Mr Smol. He looked at me with his dark, glass eyes -who knew the look from a stuffed bear can make one feel so guilty- and I picked him up for the last time from his position on my bed. I

looked at his still eyes feeling nostalgic as memories of childhood and easier times crowded my mind. With a heavy heart, I put Mr Smol down, and with heavy feet, I opened my window and stepped out, taking the first step of my last journey.

I took the long route to Molten Bridge, a bridge that used to connect one side of the city to another until a more modern bridge was built and put this bridge out of service. This bridge was my getaway whenever I had one of my many breakdowns because it was so quiet and deserted, meaning I would never be disturbed. This bridge had been my sanctuary for 3 years now; it felt almost right to end things here. I walked slowly to the edge of the bridge and looked down at the still river flowing swiftly below. I closed my eyes with the thought of the river in my mind, and I opened my arms out like a bird. The cold wind blew against my body and through my fingers as if it were trying to move me away from the edge.

My decision was already made, though, and with no hesitation, I jumped.

1. CHLOE:

-2 DAYS AFTER THE JUMP-

I watched as the casket was lowered into the ground, and that's when I knew this was real. I had always wanted to know what it was like to be an only child, where I can have my own bathroom and no one would steal my clothes, but I had never thought that that would actually happen. It was hard to believe that someone who I had looked up to so much was no longer in my life. I miss her voice and her constant scolding when I get on her nerves.

It was just a few days ago when she and I snuck out of the house at night to buy some food because we were hungry, and we were caught by our parents. My parents had said that we were grounded for life, but who knew her life was only going to last a few more days. I felt guilty; why was I alive and she dead? I didn't even know why she had jumped off that bridge. If I knew I would've been able to help her, and that's what makes my heart sink the most.

I didn't know all the details about her death. All that I knew was my mum had found Tia's suicide note on her bed, and a few hours later, a search party found her on the shore of the river.

I can feel my mum next to me now; her shoulders shaking violently as she sobbed. People had approached me and asked me how my mother was handling the death as if I didn't care about Tia's death at all. I would still answer them, though, and tell them that she wasn't handling the loss too well. What I did not tell them though is that she was handling the loss the best; she showed her pain physically by crying. People overlooked my dad and me and assumed we weren't feeling as disorientated as my mum about the loss because of the small sound we were making, but they were wrong. I keep my pain inside of me, never to be seen by others so that I may seem strong because I know that if I break I'd lose my mind.

The police had shown me Tia's suicide note. She gave me her bike to keep, but what use is her bike to me when I will never be able to ride it without thinking of her? She apologised repeatedly in her last written words, but if she knew that committing suicide was going to hurt us why would she still do it? Why would she leave a will like that's going to make up for her not being here anymore? Why didn't she wake me up? I could have helped her. Why didn't she put any effort into living? I was beginning to get mad, and the tears I've tried to hold back were threatening to spill.

It's funny how in a matter of seconds, someone that played a role in your life every single day can turn into just a memory.

I felt the sudden weight of a hand on my shoulder. I wiped my tears hastily and turned my head to see a man that I didn't recognise looking down at me. His eyes were full of worry, and I knew my tears had lured in a sympathetic bystander that was ready to force their 'comfort' onto me.

"Chloe, are you ok? I know you're having a hard time right now, and just know that I'm here for you."

I didn't even know who this guy was and he was acting like we've known each other for years. This is what people do; they see you in your moment of weakness and act like they've suddenly known you their entire lives.

I sighed heavily, knowing very well I couldn't do anything about it. "I'm fine, thank you."

He dropped his unwelcome hand from my shoulder and, before walking off, gave me a tight smile.

I looked to my mum, and there she was drowning in tears again while people brought in buckets to save her.

I scanned the crowd for my dad, and there he was sitting on a chair and was staring blankly –and silently- at the ground, unlike my mother.

He held no emotions on his face and in that moment despite my father being right across me and my mother sitting right next to me, I felt more alone than ever.

Tia, why did you have to leave? Not only have I lost you, but I've lost the two other most important people in my life. I know you're sorry, but sorry isn't going to bring you back.

2. MR. LASTOR:

-4 DAYS AFTER THE JUMP-

I held her note in my hand, taking in deep breaths as I read over it again and again. I don't understand why she'd do something like this, how long had she been planning to do it? She used to always tell me about how she wanted to become a journalist and travel around the world, see new things, become something...

But all she is now is dead. My first daughter who not long ago I had carried in my arms, and who I had taught everything I know to, is gone forever.

The patter of feet hitting the ground could be heard from outside the kitchen, and in walked Mrs Lastor.

She glanced at the note and sighed heavily. "Are you still reading that note? Just get rid of it, it's of no use to us now. It won't bring back Tia."

I stared at her in astonishment. “This note is the last thing I have of her!”

“You’re insane to think that. Her suicide isn’t all we have of her! We hold precious memories of her, and even though she isn’t here, she’s still with us everywhere you look. Have you never thought of that? Quit moping, it’s all you’ve been doing ever since the funeral. Tia wouldn’t have wanted this, she even wrote so in that note of hers.”

I knew what she said was true, but I was too stubborn to admit it. I couldn’t let go of her, I will not let go of her.

I got up and brushed past Mrs Lastor. I climbed up the stairs, holding the note with a steel tight grip. I turned the corner at the top of the stairs and found myself standing across her bedroom. No one had entered the room ever since she left us.

I took an unsure step towards her room. I feared that if I entered her room the pain I feel for her loss will deepen. I took another step, and it felt like it was against my will. I walked the rest of the way towards her room, my heart pounding painfully. My hand wrapped around the door handle, and I turned it slowly. Light poured into the room that was left in the dark for days, and my heart began to ache.

I walked into the room, taking in everything as I passed. On the wall hung a photo of me and Tia. She was hugging my arm, and I was

staring down at her. I remember when that photo was taken, she was so happy because it was the day of her graduation.

My legs felt weak, and I sat on Tia's bed. She had made sure to make her bed neatly before she left like I had fussed her to do every morning.

Sitting on her bed with me was Mr Smol, he gazed up at me intensely with his glass eyes. I cupped him up into my hands. This bear was a gift to Tia when she was 8, and 10 years later she had refused to throw it out.

18 years of her life wasted. I couldn't help but feel responsible for what had happened. I was always so pushing, and I had such high expectations for her. I should've been easier on her, maybe if I had she'd still be here. I lay on her bed holding Mr Smol close to my chest. I allowed it to give me comfort like how it gave to Tia and began sobbing. Tia, I'm so sorry. I should've helped you more. I'm so sorry. Tia's note fell from my hands and onto the floor, but I didn't care about the note anymore or what was on it. Mrs Lastor was right, it's not going to bring back my Tia.

There was so much I didn't know about Tia, and that was evident in her note. I didn't know why she jumped. She wrote of torment being thrown at her, but by who? She wrote about how she changed herself to fit in with people that she didn't consider friends but when... why?

I continued sobbing harder than I did before and I felt like even Mr Smol who wasn't alive being was judging my childlike behaviour. I needed to know why Tia did this, and there was only one person who knew the reason.

I moved out of the fetal position I was in and got off Tia's bed. Her covers were no longer neat, and out of habit, I fixed it up, smoothing the covers out until it was neat again. I walked to Tia's desk and opened up the desk drawer, revealing a small, velvet box. It was a gift from Lethia, Tia's best friend. In her letter, she had requested that Lethia gets this gift back.

Knowing why you left us is the most important thing to me right now. You left us in the dark, I'm lost.

We really wish you were here Tia. We miss you... I miss you.

2. LETHIA:

-1 WEEK AFTER THE JUMP-

I didn't go to her funeral. It just felt too soon to say goodbye to her; everything was so sudden. I felt guilty that I didn't go, so I promised myself that I will visit her privately.

The day I received that dreadful phone call from Mr Lastor was the worst day of my entire life. I locked myself away with my thoughts and torn heart in my room and didn't answer to anyone's calls.

My phone was in my hand almost every minute of the day because I was hoping someone –maybe even Tia herself- would message me and tell me this was just all part of a hilarious prank. Despite my hopes and prayers, that didn't happen and I knew she was gone forever.

I knew the reason she jumped. I was guilty and there was no denying it. Tia had asked for my forgiveness, but because of the grudge that I was holding against her, she did the only thing she thought was right; she jumped.

I was guilty and there was no denying it.

A year ago, she had wanted a new life, a new beginning and she thought to do that was to change herself. She did everything differently and, well, stopped being Tia. She had made a new group of friends and had pretended the years we had together never existed. I had no more friends, and I was all alone. A year later, she asked for forgiveness and I said something that would torment me to this day: no. It is my worst regret. All because of my adamant behaviour, she is gone.

I wanted to join Tia, after all, I'm the one that should be dead, not her. I had thoughts of ending my life. But I knew that even killing myself wasn't going to make me feel less culpable.

I was clueless and lost... until yesterday. Mr Lastor -whose calls I was not answering- knocked on my door. I opened the door trying to think of an excuse to explain why I was ignoring him, and why I didn't come to Tia's funeral, but there was no need. He stood silently in front of me. In his hand, he held a letter and a small, familiar box.

My heart dropped. Mr Lastor stared at me with tired, sad eyes.

"Tia wanted me to give this to you..." his voice was sudden and distant.

I smiled forcefully and took the velvet box. There was a moment of silence, I nodded goodbye and grabbed the handle of the door to close it.

"Why did she do it?"

I froze.

"Pardon?"

"I know you know why all I ask is for you to tell me."

I looked at his tired, grieving eyes and I knew I couldn't tell him why she did it. Telling him would make his mourning for her deepen, and telling him would make him hate me.

"I don't know, sir. I really don't..."

For a second, it looked like he believed me, but hope was gone when his tired eyes narrowed menacingly at me.

He didn't say anything, though, just turned and walked off.

He may be gone now, but I knew this wasn't going to be the last I see of him. I felt sympathy for him. Mr Lastor, the man who had cared for Tia the most in this world and had loved her with so much passion. Imagine loving someone so much, and then that same person leaving you without any explanation.

With a heavy heart, I closed the door. For the first time, I looked down at the velvet box. I knew what it was; I recognised it from when we were small. I had gifted this to Tia to mark our eternal friendship. I opened the small box and there it was an all too familiar key pendant necklace.

The fresh tears fell from my eyes and I began crying. It's not fair what I did to Tia, she deserved better.

I stood at her grave. There were flowers of so many colours on it, but her grave was still grey. These flowers will die soon, and the colours won't matter.

I had the velvet box within my hand, clutching it tightly. I felt rigid and awkward. I closed my eyes and sighed.

"I'm a bit late, I'm sorry I didn't come to your funeral. I just couldn't believe you were gone."

And then the tears started flowing.

“I know this is my fault, and I just want you to know that I forgive you, and I'm sorry. I was never mad at you, I know you felt pressured by your dad, and I know you wanted to leave this place and travel the world. I didn't give you that chance, and for that, I'm a horrible friend. You've been everything to me all these years, and I couldn't give you that in return.

“Sorry doesn't make up for what I've done, I know. You don't have to forgive me, like how I didn't forgive you. I just wanted you to know, even though it's too late. I love you, Tia. You were, and still are my best friend and nothing can change that. I brought the necklace, and I don't want it; it's yours and you deserve it not me.”

I opened the box, took out Tia's necklace, and placed it on the dirt covering her. I wiped my tears using the back of my hand.

“Goodbye, Tia.”

I turned and walked in the direction of my car. My heart felt lighter, but nothing will ever remove the guilt and mourning I feel. I will always regret not forgiving her when I should've, it was stupid of me. But at the same time, I 'm happy for the time Tia and I had together, and I'll never forget the precious memories I have of her.

THE END