

Poetic Peace

Caroline is dressed in a white summer dress as she looks out over the rolling green valley below. Fixating on the gentle haze that blankets the distant horizon, she slowly breathes in the sweet smell of flowers before moving her attention to the towering white clouds that decorate the sun-drenched sky as far as the eye can see.

A few seconds pass in the relative silence of the moment when a voice speaks out from behind her.

“Hello, Sunshine.”

Instantly recognizing the voice, Caroline turns around with a big smile on her face. “You’re walking!” she says in a proud, yet surprised voice.

Smiling brighter than he ever has before, a row of trees sways in the wind behind Thomas as he adoringly looks at Caroline.

“You’re wearing your nice white shirt and smiling so brightly!” Caroline elates, pausing for a moment to absorb the image before her. “You look so beautiful!”

Thomas smiles at Caroline, “Do you recognize this place?” “Of course... this is one my favorite spots.” Caroline states as she thoughtfully looks around.

Thomas watches her contently for a moment before curiously asking in a gentle voice, “Remember the time you wheeled me up here?”

A slight hint of tears begin to collect in the corner of Caroline’s eyes as she focuses her attention back on Thomas. Images from that day collect in her mind as she recalls pushing an uncomfortable and worn down Thomas in his wheelchair. “I remember,” she says, picturing herself standing behind him as the two of them looked out over the summer valley. “I remember how much pain you were in... And I remember how much I wanted to make everything better.”

Noticing her somber reaction, Thomas silently motions for Caroline to come closer with his finger.

The sad look in her eyes is quickly replaced with the shape of happiness as she affectionately approaches Thomas and embraces him.

Thomas runs his fingers through her hair as he softly speaks, “I’m okay now... The pain is gone.”

“You don’t know how happy that makes me!” Caroline assures him, resting her head on his shoulder in the peace of the moment.

The clouds drift endlessly across the sky and the trees continue to sway in the wind while several seconds pass in a silent embrace.

“You hear that?” Thomas asks, his mouth only inches from her ear.

“Hear what? Caroline replies.

“The trees,” states Thomas.

Caroline takes a moment to focus on the sound of the leaves rustling in the warm summer breeze. “Yes,” she responds with a smile.

“Just like the last time we were here,” Thomas gently speaks, “And the smell...”

Her head still resting on his shoulder, Caroline slowly breathes in the air through her nose. “The flowers?” she inquires.

“Yes... same as last time,” he remembers, gazing upwards. “Even the clouds in the sky.”

Caroline lightly laughs, “You have a good memory.”

A few more seconds peacefully pass as Thomas thinks to himself. “You know what I remember the most?” he asks.

Gently taking her head off his shoulder, she looks him sincerely in the eyes.

“What you told me that day,” he explains.

Another smile takes shape on Caroline’s face. “I remember,” she affirms.

“That was the first time you said it,” Thomas proudly states.

Caroline gently puts her hand on the back of his head, affectionately leaning her forehead on his as she thinks back to the moment she placed a flower in Thomas’ hair and whispered “I love you” in his ear. “Yes,” she affirms, “But I meant it long before that.”

Again, several seconds pass in tranquility before Thomas eventually speaks out, “Can you feel that?”

“Feel what?” asks Caroline.

“Peace,” he whispers in the most sincere and relieved voice.

She closes her eyes and focuses on the moment before softly confirming, “Yes.”

“Don't ever forget this moment, this feeling of peace,” requests Thomas. “Because this is exactly how I felt the day you brought me here... For that brief period, I want you to know, I felt no pain.”

Caroline takes her forehead off his and looks him in the eye. “Yes... But you're better now! We have the rest of our lives for moments like this!”

Thomas backs up a few steps as a sad look comes over his face. “I’m sorry, Caroline.”

“Sorry for what?” She asks in confusion.

On the verge of tears, Thomas honestly responds, “It just got to be too much.”

“What did?” she inquires.

“The pain, the suffering,” he tells her. “I couldn't hold on any longer.”

Caroline becomes more anxious and concerned with every passing moment.

“What are you talking about?” She asks. “You're here, now... We're together, right?”

At that moment a phone can be heard ringing in the distance. Distracted by this, Caroline briefly looks off towards the sound in confusion.

Thomas becomes anxious as he puts his hand on her shoulders. “Listen to me, there’s not much time,” he insists, pulling a flower out from behind his back with the other and putting it in her hair, “This is the same flower you put in my hair that day... I kept it in the photo album by your bed.”

Caroline smiles as a relieved look comes over her face. “You kept it?” she asks.

Another phone ring chimes in the distance, and again Caroline looks off to the side in confusion.

Thomas becomes even more anxious. “There’s something I want you to remember,” he tells her.

Caroline looks back at Thomas, still confused as to the source of the ring.

Thomas gently moves his hands from her shoulders to behind her neck and head and looks her straight in the eye with the most genuine look. “My life was never easy,” he sincerely explains, “But it was always worth it.”

The phone rings a third time.

Again, Caroline looks of to the side before quickly returning her gaze to Thomas.

“You were worth it,” Thomas declares, looking deep into her eyes.

The phone rings yet again, but this time Caroline stays fixed on Thomas as her vision starts to blur.

“Always you,” Thomas finishes as he begins to fade away.

The phone rings again and Caroline awakes in her bed.

She reaches over and answers the phone that is lying on her nightstand next to the bed. “Hello?”

A sad, yet comforting voice speaks faintly on the other end of the phone, “Caroline...honey...it's Thomas...he's passed away.”

Hardly able to digest the news, Caroline speaks in disbelief. “That can’t be!”

“It happened last night while he slept,” the caller informs her, “I’m so sorry.”

Caroline goes numb as she drops the phone on her bed and struggles to catch her breath. Tears begin to flow uncontrollably down her face.

The seconds seem like hours as she sits frozen in her bed, not knowing what to do.

Then she remembers the dream.

She reaches across to her nightstand and opens the top drawer as if her only salvation can be found there.

Caroline pulls out her photo album and pages through the many pictures of her and Thomas in his wheelchair. Page after page is hastily turned until she arrives at the last page, where—just as Thomas promised in the dream—lays the flower she had given him the day she brought him to her favorite spot on the hill.

Suddenly the tears stop as a faint smile takes shape on her face. She gently picks up the flower and breathes its scent in deeply through her nose.

Outside her bedroom window, the summer breeze blows as gently as it did in her dream. White clouds dot the sky and the sound of leaves rustling in the wind is the only sound that can be heard.

Caroline whispers to herself, “Peace.”