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Separate Ways

Bobby looked out the window of his Honda Civic anxiously; blue eyes darting left and right as he looked out at the stretch of highway that wound through the mountains towards William's Overlook. He could hear his heart pounding in his chest as it cried out for his soul mate. To Bobby it felt like an eternity since he last saw Jackie, his one true love and future bride to be. Only three months before he'd asked her to marry him, and to his utter delight Jackie had said the eight most beautiful words he'd ever heard in his life, "I love you Bobby. Yes, I'll marry you!"

Jackie's parents had given her a very special present for her graduation, an all-expense paid trip around Europe. Bobby wished he could have gone with her, but he knew his parents couldn't afford it, especially not with the impending wedding and the cost of the ring. So, after a tear-filled, heart-felt goodbye at the airport he'd had to wait until Jackie returned to him.

The young, handsome 19-year old's heart skipped a beat as he saw the flash of headlights turn off the road and pull into the parking lot. It was Jackie's old clunker, a red Volkswagon Bug; now was the moment of truth. Bobby quickly ran a hand through his long, dirty blonde hair, pushing it back from his eyes before glancing at himself in the mirror and then climbing out of the car as Jackie pulled her's up next to him.

For months his heart had pined for it's other half, and now that he could see her again his heart was pounding so hard he thought it might jump out of his chest. A mix of emotions swirled through him. He was ecstatic to see her again, practically like a puppy welcoming its owner home. However, he was worried something was wrong.

He wanted to be there to welcome her at the airport but, she'd sent him a single text saying that her parents were picking her up, and they'd meet later at their favorite spot. She was probably just tired after such a long flight. He hoped that's what it was, but he had his doubts; though he wouldn't admit them to himself.

"It's been three months, what if something's changed? Why didn't she write for the last month and a half? Is she okay? I hope everything's okay. I'm sure she was just busy. I hope she's feeling better now. I wonder if she's thought about the wedding at all?" he thought, all of the blink of an eye as the car door opened and Jackie got out.

It was like a dream. Her bright-red hair flowing in the cool night breeze that rolled off the mountains. The light shining out from the inside of her car gave her a halo of golden light as it caught in the mist that hung in the air. She was dressed in a pair of tight, white jeans with holes around her knees, along with a black and white, striped top that hung loosely on her, and a white, leather jacket to match her pants. The sight of her was a bit of a shock. She looked angelic, and very different from how she used to dress; all sun dresses, skirts, and floral tops.

"You look beautiful angel," Bobby said with a smile as he went to move around the car to open the door for her, but Jackie beat him to it.

"It's a bit chilly, can we talk inside the car?" she said as he opened it before slipping inside and closing it behind her.

The slam of the door closing only increased his pounding heart, making it nearly deafening in his ears.

"Something's wrong." He thought with a frown before silently slipping into the car before looking towards Jackie and awkwardly leaning over to give her a hug and kiss.

Jackie recoiled slightly, “Bobby we...”

He immediately interrupted her. A part of him knew where this was going, but he wasn't going to accept it. He couldn't accept it; maybe he could stop this from happening.

“So, how was Europe? I bet it was a blast. I wanna hear all about it.” he said with a smile.

“It was fun. A lot of fun.” said Jackie with hesitation in her voice; she knew she was about to break this poor, kind-hearted, country boy's heart; still it had to be done, but not right away.

“I got to see a lot of places over there. We went to the Tower of London and saw the Crown Jewels.” Jackie said with a thin smile as he eyes seemed to stare off to someplace far away, and a light blush tinted her cheeks.

“Awesome. You gotta show me some pictures. Maybe it'll give me some ideas for the wedding ring. Though I doubt I'll be able to afford anything that fancy.” He said with a light laugh. In reality he'd already bought her the ring she wanted thanks to money he'd borrowed from his parents, grandparents, and the bank. Though, he couldn't help but wonder why she said “we”.

Jackie let out a sigh and frowned. “Yeah, we also saw where Shakespeare was born. And we went to Paris and saw the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre. I really loved it over there.”

“Then, what's wrong babe?” said Bobby, interrupting Jackie as he watched the corners of her full, glossy lips turn down as her bright green eyes dropped to her lap where her hands were resting. “Why did she say we again?” he wondered. That was when he noticed it; there wasn't a ring on her finger.

“Why wasn't there a ring on her finger? Did she loose it? Maybe she forgot it? Who was this we?” he thought. Though, in his heart he knew what was coming but, wasn't prepared for it.

An emotional train wreck he couldn't stop. He was stuck in the tunnel staring down the oncoming light, and he was about to be run over.

“Bobby, we need to talk. Some stuff happened while I was away. Things are different now.”

Bobby's heart sank. The pounding of his heart ceased, the fluttering of butterflies in his stomach died off; suddenly, it was all gone. He felt a tightness building in his chest and a lump building in his throat, but he remained silent. However, he was trying to deny what he knew was coming. “No, no, no,” rolled through his mind over and over like the rattle of wheels over train tracks.

“I... I'm different now. I learned so much and saw so many amazing things. I don't want to stay here anymore.” Said Jackie flatly.

“Alright. I can transfer to somewhere else. I still haven't decided where I wanna go yet. I'm sure I can get a student loan to pay for wherever.” Rambled Bobby as he spat out the words quickly to try and derail the conversation while utterly denying the blatant truth of the situation.

“No, I don't want to be with you anymore.” Said Jackie; her eyes still focused on her hands as her fingers interlocked and writhed together.

Bobby fell silent as his heart gave out, crushed inside his chest. He wasn't ready for the emotional impact as the words barreled over him. His hopes, dreams, heart, and soul shattered; he was left feeling bare, naked, and alone in the growing darkness as the light, his light, now grew further away. He tried to choke back the tears; he didn't want her to see him cry, he didn't want to cry. All that was left were her words, his mind totally blank as he stared at the dashboard and off into nothingness with cold, dead eyes.

Jackie continued while Bobby struggled to understand the words. “I want to go out and adventure. I want to see more of the world. I saw so many amazing things and learned so much. I just don’t want anything holding me back.” She said, a slight grin turning up at the corners of her lips as her mind drifted back to Europe.

Word after word rolled over him, wounding him deeper with every syllable. He felt his eyes grow hot as the lump in his throat threatened to strangle him to death. He couldn’t hold it back. Heavy, searing tears rolled down his freckled cheeks as he swallowed hard and took in gasping breath. He began to quietly sob, choking back cries of anguish. He didn’t know what to say. He didn’t know what to do. He was tied to the tracks as the emotional train wreck barreled over him.

Jackie went silent, never making eye contact or looking towards him as she nervously waited for him to say something. Her left hand dug into her small, leather purse imprinted with pieces of art from the Louvre. She grasped something inside and pulled her hand free before reaching forward slowly and placing what she’d grabbed down on the dashboard.

It was a small, golden band set with a single small, princess cut, white diamond, and two identically cut blue sapphires. The moonlight above reflected off the gems and narrow band of gold, making them sparkle like stars on the hard, black, plastic dashboard. It was his grandmother’s engagement ring, Jackie’s engagement ring. He remembered his mother giving it to him when he told her, and how happy she’d been. Now, he was going to have to return it to her.

Finally, he choked out three small words, delivering them as controlled as he could.

“Who is he?”

Jackie looked up and over at him for the first time; her emerald eyes wide. She considered lying to him, but why bother now.

“That’s none of your business. It doesn’t matter.”

The corner of his mouth raised in an angry grimace as his eyebrows furrowed and forehead scrunched up. He wanted to yell, scream at her, say a million different words. This wasn’t the Jackie he knew, this wasn’t his Jackie. She’d left to go to Europe and never came back. “Get out,” Snarled Bobby. “Just GET THE FUCK OUT!” he roared; his love and pain turning to all consuming, blazing rage. He had to do it.

Jackie stared, her mouth hanging agape as a streak of cold fear ran through her. She’d never seen Bobby angry before; he was always so kind, caring, and loving. He never raised his voice to anyone, especially her, and was always so quick to help people; a regular Boy Scout.

“GET OUT!” he screamed as hot tears began to roll down his cheeks once more, as he struggled to choke them back.

The passenger door was thrown open as Jackie scrambled to get from the car. In a split second she was in her own vehicle and cranking it up before tearing away into the night.

Bobby watched silently as Jackie’s single tail-light disappeared into the darkness like the lantern on a caboose. His blue eyes, now turned red from tears looked down to the gleaming ring seated on the dashboard; still glittering hopefully in the night as waves of sadness washed over him making him sink into a sea of despair. He was left alone in utter silence; consumed in the darkness in the cab of the car and the gaping hole left inside him.