

Fireflies

Everything eventually became a memory; a small picture in their minds after the grief of everything that had happened had passed by, like a little green firefly...

The building was burning. It was the middle of the night and chaos filled the streets as smoke poured from the windows of the apartment building. Sirens came from down the street and several fire trucks arrived at the scene. The firemen got right to work.

The fight went on for hours. The firefighters were exhausted and soaked, but they pressed on. News crews had arrived to broadcast the disaster. Civilians who lived in the building watched it burn. Children were screaming. People were crying. It was a typical scene for the workers.

Three fighters were in the building, doing a search. They were sent in by their chief, Eric, and forty minutes had passed. He and his co-worker, Lance, were standing by, waiting for their return when a deep, terrifying sound was heard.

“They need to get out, now!” Eric yelled in frustration.

“The building is about to come down! They’re not going to make it!” Lance yelled back as he watched the walls beginning to crumble.

“Wait, I can see them!” Eric exclaimed as he saw only two dark silhouettes emerging from the smoke. “Where’s David?” The building crumbled to the ground noisily and smoke and dust filled the streets.

Jacob was sitting at the lounge table, reading the newspaper when the team returned at seven o’clock in the morning. They were exhausted and wet and most of them wanted to sleep, but something was keeping them awake, something they would never forget.

“You’re back later than expected. Did everything go well?” Jacob asked as he placed the newspaper on the table.

“More or less.” Brett replied. It struck Jacob as strange that the unusually talkative Brett would on only say a few words.

None of them were making eye contact. Jacob could see that their faces were full of grief and sadness. “Where’s David?” he asked.

There was silence. He looked at Kasey and noticed her eyes were red from crying. Although she was strong and good at her job, her emotions were delicate.

“He’s gone. I’m sorry Jacob.” Eric replied in the silence. He began to leave the room. “I’m going to make a few calls.”

There was silence again, this time gut wrenching. Jacob was too stunned to speak. David ... his best friend gone? Those words repeated in his head like a broken record.

“We’re really sorry Jacob. It was bad timing.” Lance sat down next to Jacob. “We all take risks. David knew what he was doing, but I guess luck wasn’t on his side.”

“Why did it have to be him? Why did it have to be anybody?”

“These things happen sometimes. We just need to move on. That’s what David would have wanted.”

Eric re-entered the room. He looked concerned, just as he always did, but this time it seemed different. “I’ve called David’s wife. She didn’t take it well, and she insisted on coming her this afternoon. An investigator is also coming. It’s standard procedure, so just hang tight.”

Later, the visitor's bell rang and an exhausted looking woman was let into the station. She was Sarah, David's wife. Everyone could tell that she had been crying and her hair appeared messy. She sat in the lounge with her husband's coworkers.

"I want to hear the entire story," she insisted. "And it better be the truth." Sarah was trying to hold back her tears.

"Alright." Brett decided to be the one to tell. "David, Kasey and I were assigned to search as much of the building as possible for trapped people: just the same procedures as every other emergency. We were up on the sixth floor when we felt the floor starting to give way. We ran for the stairs and began heading down. Debris was falling everywhere and the flames were beginning to surround us, so we made one last run for it and just as we were about to leave, a part of the ceiling collapsed right on top of David. We couldn't find him in the rubble with the short amount of time that we had, so we had no choice..." His voice trailed off. He didn't want to say "leave him behind". It didn't sound very dignified to the nature of their job. He suddenly began to feel more ashamed.

Sarah was crying. Kasey was trying not to. "Sarah, I'm very sorry." She tried to comfort her but Sarah was stubborn.

"This can't be... he would never leave me!" Sarah was beginning to have an anxiety attack.

"Please calm down." Eric tried to help, but nothing was working.

"He would never leave me!" Sarah repeated. She jumped up from her seat and ran out of the room.

"Sarah, wait!" Lance called after her. He and his coworkers all went to find her.

Sarah had run up the stairs to the second floor. Her heart was flooded with sadness and anger, both clashing at once for control. She heard David's friend calling her name, but she ignored them. She rushed down the hall and stopped when she noticed something unusual. There was a door where there wasn't supposed to be one.

The door looked very old, almost like it was made in the 1800s. What seemed even stranger was that the door was on the same wall as a window that looked out to the street below. Her curiosity willed her to reach for the cold, rusty door handle and turn it. The door squeaked and opened to expose a cozy, windowless room lit by a fireplace with several large, Victorian sitting chairs surrounding it. Standing in the middle of the room by the fire was a man. Sarah's heart skipped a beat.

"David?" She asked through her tears.

"Hello Sarah," he replied with a calming voice.

Sarah ran to him and embraced him. "I knew you weren't gone! I knew that you wouldn't leave me!"

"Sarah," David said as he looked her right in the eyes, "I really am dead."

Sarah looked back at him disbelievingly. "But you're here! I can feel you!" she cried.

"Sit down and let me explain." David sat her down in one of the chairs and he was about to occupy another when he heard a voice from outside the door which was left wide open.

"It's you..." said Jacob as he stared into the mysterious room. "But how?" The other firefighters were also outside the room. They were in doubt at what they were seeing.

"Hey guys. Come in." David welcomed them into the room, but they didn't move.

“This must be a trick. You’re dead, so this must be a hallucination,” said Jacob as he took a step back.

David stuck his hand outside the door and it began to dissolve into a cloud of smoke, but he pulled it back before it was completely gone, and it reappeared. “I can’t leave this room without disappearing. The only way for you to know is to come in, take a seat, and let me explain.”

Jacob did not know what it was that made him step into the unfamiliar room, but he did. His colleagues followed him reluctantly and they all took a seat in the chairs. At first, nothing was said. Finally, Eric spoke up.

“How is this possible? You were killed,” he said.

“It’s all still a little strange to me too. To tell you the truth, it was the fireflies.” David explained.

“When the ceiling fell, all I could think about was the pain, but after a few seconds it all disappeared and I was surrounded by darkness. Then there were dozens of these fireflies surrounding me. They told me not to be afraid and then led me here. I waited and I wasn’t sure how much time had passed, but they told me that here, time does not exist. It’s only a simplicity of measurement that was put on the ever changing ‘now’ to make it seem more ‘real’. I decided to relax by the fire. Before I knew it, Sarah came and found me.”

“David,” Kasey said. “I’m really sorry that we couldn’t save you. We tried, but it was no use.” She was almost crying.

“Don’t be sorry, just be thankful. If you had stayed to try and get me out, the building would have crushed you too. Besides, if you had found me, I would have already been dead.” David replied. Everyone wondered how he could speak of his death as if it was something that didn’t matter.

The fire crackled comfortingly. Suddenly David’s wife and friends felt warm and relaxed. The scary thought of death had left their minds and they stared at the fire in happiness. Then the room was filled with fireflies.

“What’s this?” Brett was astonished to see so many flying around.

“They’re saying that now that everyone’s at peace and accepts my death, it’s time for me to go,” David replied.

“you can’t stay longer?” Sarah pleaded.

David shook his head. “But don’t feel sad. I’ll always be with you all in your hearts.”

Sarah gave her husband a hug, then a passionate kiss goodbye. “I love you. Forever and ever.”

They parted from each other and everyone except David left the room. Just before the door closed, Jacob added one last goodbye.

“I’ll see you on the other side,” he said. David smiled and waved. The door closed and it dissolved into a beautiful funeral procession of fireflies.

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