

Chapter 03

The Weight of “What If?”

There is a question that visits many people after a sudden loss.

“What if?”

It is such a small phrase, but it can carry such a heavy weight.

What if I had noticed something sooner?

What if I had asked one more question?

What if there was something I could have done?

What if I had known that I was saying goodbye?

After Anthony died, my mind searched for answers because my heart could not accept that someone I loved so deeply could be here one moment and gone the next.

When someone leaves suddenly, you don’t just grieve their absence. You grieve all the moments you thought you still had coming.

You grieve the conversations you’ll never have.

The hugs you’ll never feel.

The memories that will never be made.

And somewhere in that grief, guilt can quietly creep in.

A mother’s heart naturally wants to protect her child. It doesn’t matter how old they are. You never stop being their mom. When something happens that you cannot fix, cannot change, and cannot undo, your heart starts searching for a reason.

But love is not measured by the moment you lost someone.

Love is measured by a lifetime.

Anthony knew he was loved because love was woven into the years before that moment. It was in the hugs, the conversations, the sacrifices, the prayers, the countless ordinary days that made up a life together.

I have had to remind myself that a person does not leave this world wondering if their mother loved them when they were surrounded by a lifetime of that love.

The guilt comes because the love is so big.

We wish we had one more chance to say: “I love you.” “I’m proud of you.” “I wish I could have protected you.”

But sometimes the hardest truth to accept is that love cannot always prevent loss.

Love can hold someone.

Love can comfort someone.

Love can stay connected forever.

But love cannot always change what happens.

And that is one of the hardest lessons a grieving heart has to learn.

Anthony's story did not end because his life ended. The love between a mother and son does not disappear. It changes shape. It lives in memories, in stories, in the ways he continues to influence the people who loved him.

I still carry the ache of losing him.

But I also carry the gift of having been his mother.

And no loss can ever take that away.

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