

Chapter 05

Learning to Live Without Leaving Him Behind

One of the hardest things about losing someone you love is learning that life keeps asking you to continue.

The sun still rises.

People still laugh.

Birthdays still come.

Families still gather.

And sometimes that feels almost impossible.

There can be a part of your heart that believes moving forward means moving away from the person you lost. As if enjoying a beautiful moment means you have forgotten them. As if laughing means you miss them less. As if finding happiness again somehow betrays the love you still carry.

But I have learned that love does not work that way.

Love does not ask us to stop living.

Love asks us to remember.

Anthony is not honored by my sadness alone. He is honored by the way I continue to love. He is honored by the stories I tell, the memories I hold close, and the way his life continues to matter.

I used to think that if I let myself be happy again, I was leaving a part of him behind.

But I have learned something different.

I can miss him and still smile.

I can cry for him and still laugh.

I can wish he were here and still be grateful for the people God has placed in my life.

My children still need me. My family still needs my love. My grandchildren still need my hugs and my voice and my presence. There are still people who need the mother, grandmother, and wife that I am.

Anthony's absence changed me, but it did not take away the love I still have to give.

Grief has taught me that the heart has room for both sorrow and joy. It can hold the deepest pain and the greatest love at the same time.

There are moments when I see something beautiful and my first thought is, "I wish Anthony could see this."

There are moments when I wish I could call him, hear his voice, or tell him something that happened in my day.

Those moments still hurt.

But they also remind me of something precious:

The pain exists because the love was real.

I would never wish away the years I had with Anthony just because losing him hurts. The love was worth the heartbreak. The memories were worth the tears.

I carry him with me.

Not as a weight that keeps me from living, but as a love that walks with me.

I believe that the people we love leave pieces of themselves behind. They live in our hearts, in our stories, in the ways they changed us.

Anthony changed me.

He taught me a love deeper than I knew existed. He taught me that a mother's heart never stops loving. Not when a child grows older. Not when miles separate you. Not even when death does.

I will keep living.

I will keep loving.

I will keep remembering.

And every step forward I take is not a step away from Anthony.

It is a step carrying the love he gave me.

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