

Chapter 08

Finding Purpose in the Pain

There are some experiences in life that change you so deeply that you cannot simply go back to who you were before.

Losing Anthony was one of those moments.

I would never choose that pain. I would never choose a world without my son in it. There are still moments when my heart aches because I wish he were here — sharing another conversation, another laugh, another ordinary day that I once thought I had plenty of.

But through the heartbreak, something began to grow.

A deeper compassion.

A deeper understanding.

A desire to reach out to others who are hurting and remind them they are not alone.

Before loss, you can have sympathy for someone's pain. You can feel sadness for what they are going through. But when you have walked through your own valley of grief, something changes.

You understand the silence.

You understand the questions.

You understand what it feels like to smile on the outside while carrying a broken heart on the inside.

Anthony's life and death changed the way I see people. Everyone carries something. Everyone has a story. Everyone needs compassion.

And I believe God can take even the most painful parts of our lives and use them for something meaningful.

Not because the pain was good.

Not because losing Anthony was something that was meant to happen.

But because love can grow even in places where we thought nothing beautiful could survive.

Through this journey, God brought Carlo into my life. Someone who understood the importance of compassion, presence, and caring for people in their most vulnerable moments.

Together, we began to see how much people need someone to sit with them in their hardest seasons. Someone who does not rush their grief. Someone who does not try to erase their pain. Someone who simply says, "I am here with you."

That is where the heart behind the Presence Network was born.

Out of love.

Out of loss.

Out of the understanding that every person deserves to be seen, heard, and cared for.

Anthony's life mattered far beyond the years he was here.

His story continues through the love he left behind.

It continues through the way I care for others. It continues through the compassion I now have for people walking through grief. It continues through every person who feels a little less alone because someone chose to be present with them.

I wish I could have protected Anthony from what happened.

I wish I could have changed the outcome.

That is a wish many grieving parents carry.

But I also know this:

A life does not have to be long to be meaningful.

Anthony's life touched mine forever.

And now, because of the love I have for him, I want to help others feel the kind of love and presence that every hurting heart deserves.

His story did not end.

It continues through mine.

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