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Gracie & Alice

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Gracie & Alice

Grace enters, locks the door and throws herself on the bed. She is clearly upset and crying. Alice is outside the door, knocking.

ALICE: Gracie, hon, I made cocoa.

Grace doesn't respond, hugging her knees and shaking.

ALICE: Gracie, it's going to get cold.

No response.

ALICE: Gracie, please, let me in.

GRACE: I don't want to talk.

ALICE: We don't have to talk, just please open the door.

Grace doesn't respond.

ALICE: Sweetheart, I'm getting worried.

Frustrated, Grace grabs at an ibuprofen bottle and tries to get the pills out. Alice shakes on the handle when she hears the bottle, and eventually the door swings open. Alice is holding a key in one hand and cocoa in the other. She sets the mug down and snatches the pill bottle from her sister, sitting her back down on the bed before handing her the cocoa.

ALICE: I sprinkled cinnamon on top.

Grace takes it gingerly, staring down at the drink.

ALICE: I know how hard that must have been. I just want to say that I'm here if --

GRACE: You don't know, you're not in high school anymore, Alice.

ALICE: I was once. (Sighs) You're right, I don't know. Help me to understand.

GRACE: I said I didn't want to talk. Where's mom?

ALICE: I just got off the phone with her. She left the conference early, but her flight was delayed. She says she'll be home as soon as she can. She says she loves you and is so glad you're safe. She still wants to talk if you're ready.

GRACE: She didn't have to cut the conference short. It's not a big deal.

ALICE: (*angry*) Of course it's a big deal. You could have been killed.. I don't know what I would've done if you --

GRACE: Well, I'm here now and I'm fine, so --

ALICE: You're not fine. I saw Will!

Grace's face hardens; she doesn't respond. Alice sighs.

ALICE: I'm sorry. I shouldn't have --

GRACE: No, it's fine.

ALICE: You need to stop saying that. There's nothing fine with what happened.

GRACE: (*softly*) You hear about it on the news all the time. I just never thought that ...

ALICE: I know.

GRACE: So you saw him?

ALICE: Oh, honey, it was just a glimpse. They were wheeling Will out on a stretcher. There were so many people in the crowd, I didn't have much time to look. My main concern was finding you.

GRACE: Did he look okay? Was he breathing?

ALICE: I don't know, Gracie.

GRACE: This is all my fault. I should have gone out with him. I should have -- (*she starts sobbing again*)

ALICE: Gone out where? Gracie, please, tell me what happened. I can't help you if I don't understand.

GRACE: It was so loud -- I -- I didn't want to, I thought that -- I was so scared -- I -- I (she mutters more and her volume drops. Grace starts to shake, Alice takes the cocoa away. Grace gets louder and more frantic). I told him not to go out there! I shouldn't have let him, I should have held him back. He said it would be okay. He said that!

Alice wraps her sister in a hug, whispering in her ear.

ALICE: It's over, sweetie. It's over, it's over, you're safe. Good news is you don't have to go to school for the rest of the week. We can stay home and binge hallmark movies in our sweatpants.

Grace laughs sadly and Alice wipes the tears off her cheek.

ALICE: Was he with you when it happened?

Grace nods.

ALICE: Did you see it happen?

Grace shakes her head no.

ALICE: Gracie talk to me, please. I hate being in the dark, I need to know what happened.

Grace looks up, wiping her nose. Her expression hardens.

GRACE: You hate being in the dark? You weren't there, Alice, you weren't there, sitting in the dark when he was shot. Do you want to know what it's like to be hiding in a pitch black closet, counting the seconds after you heard a gunshot and your best friend scream? Do you need to know?!

ALICE: Yes, I do! I'm your sister, Grace, I care about you. It will only hurt you more not to talk about it.

GRACE: No, it will only hurt you more. (Pause) I -- I'm sorry. I shouldn't be taking this out on you.

ALICE: No, it's okay. Here, (Alice gestures and Grace lies on her lap. As she talks, Alice strokes her head.)

GRACE: It was halfway through the day, study hall. Will had to go to his locker, so we grabbed one of those dumb plastic passes and headed to the east wing. Then the fire alarm pulled. It was so loud, but over it the principal was saying to go into an emergency lock down, not to leave the building. W--we didn't know what to do, so we tucked into a janitor's closet. It -- it was so dark, and cold, but pressed up against him I felt safe. And then the gunshots fired. There were screams and more shots. I remember I was crying, Will was cupping my mouth so I didn't make a sound as the shots grew nearer. We knew the shooter was close, but we didn't know how close. I was so scared, Ally. I was so scared. We waited like that for a little while longer and then the fire alarm stopped and there was nothing but this eerie silence. I didn't want to move, but Will said he thought one of us should check to see if the shooter was still there. By "one of us," I knew he meant him. I told him not to, I grabbed his clothes and tried to pull him back down, I did, but he said he needed to know if he was in the clear to get me to a safer place. When he left, he closed the door behind him and it was dark again. I heard nothing but muffled screams, and then a shot. Ally, ally, I knew it was him, but I didn't go out there. I didn't help him. I was too afraid. I didn't help him. A half hour passed and I was still waiting there, numb, when I heard police yelling into comms and loud voices. When I finally got up the nerve to leave the closet, they were lifting Will up onto a stretcher. There was blood everywhere, Ally. They wouldn't let me go to him, they wouldn't even let me see where he was shot. What if he died, Ally? What if he died and it's because I was too afraid to go out and help him?

ALICE: You could have died, Gracie. Will wouldn't have wanted you to go out there.

GRACE: But --

ALICE: You're okay, and that's what matters. Going out with him would only have resulted in you getting hurt too.

GRACE: I just want him to be okay.

ALICE: I know, sweetie.

GRACE: I'm sorry you had to leave your date to come pick me up.

ALICE: (*shrugs*) He was one of those pick-his-nose-and-eat-it kind of guys anyways.

Grace laughs and lays her head back down on her sister's lap.

GRACE: Just stay with me, okay.

ALICE: Always.

The phone rings and Alice goes to get it. She plays a recorded message.

PRINCIPAL: Evening, parents and students of Sutherland High. I am calling to inform you of the events following the tragic incident at our school today. As many of you know, an armed shooter entered our school and attempted to kill multiple students. While the intentions of the shooter are still unknown, they have been apprehended and are in questioning. I regret to inform you of the casualties; five are left injured from this event, and two of our most hard working and dedicated students have sadly passed away. Will Patterson and Eva Dresler will remain in our hearts and minds and we ask that you please pray for these families as they go through such a difficult time. More information regarding the injured students will be sent out via email; we thank you for your time and understanding as we face this hardship together.

Black screen reads in white letters:

There have been 385 mass shootings in 2019.

Between the ages of 12 and 17, 742 children have died from shootings this year.

One child is worth more than all the guns on the earth.

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