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Connectedness

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I couldn't feel my face, it was like my thoughts were paralyzing every limb. Life is fragile, and if it disintegrates before our very eyes, that loss can incapacitate even our body's natural ability to breathe. However, there are things in this world that we hold onto that have the power to set our lives back into motion. I believe in *connection*: the stickiness amid humanity that cannot be destroyed. Torrential downpours the night before attributed to him falling into the falls. He lived his life with abandon, without being reckless. One of his major flaws, and greatest virtues was his intense passion to live.

I can remember it like it was yesterday, the moment he began to struggle, in the river, and the helplessness that ensued. In Jake's last moments, he seemed entirely calm, but there was a sincere concern beyond the determination. I was feet away from reaching the shore and the hope to save his life. However, the tumultuous terrain prevented his rescue. I was helpless. In that moment, I recognized my inability to control the rushing waters of life, no matter what talents and abilities I, or my friends who were there, had, there was none who could rescue Jake. I mean c'mon he was the one in our circle of friends who was always reliable. He wasn't always on time but he was dependable, and with him, one felt empowered. His untimely passing would call one to question their ability to stand firmly in the midst of tragedy. This was tragedy, and I did not see a future where I could stand firmly, all I could do, was, the absence of *feel*.

Immediately I worried for the family of my friend and for his other friends. Knowing how often he gave me strength, I worried for the others whom he had touched and cared for. As I sat there with no feeling in my face, I thought of the night before. My friend hadn't slept in the last 18 hours, he was clearly tired, but stayed awake to play a board game and enjoy time with his friends, then as I went off to sleep, on his couch, he beat me to it, and pulled out the futon while offering me a blanket. I recognized—as I sat there after his death just trying to feel—that his love for people connected him and I. Mortality, spirituality, emotion, these represent the basic nature of human existence, and through these things, we are connected. When we are affected by death, we realize how incapable we are of feeling loss. We were not meant to experience that, so our natural reaction is to become numb. I believe that God allows us to experience the tragedy of loss, in order to shape us. When I finally experienced loss, I recognized how little control I have, and that I need to rest my worries on the community I have. Whether that is with God, and with people, I know that is what Jake recognized well before his last breath, in fact, he breathed that life every day. He was always relying on his community, and as much as I felt empowered by his presence, so did he.