

THE DOOR THAT REMEMBERED US...

Lola knew she was dreaming before she even opened her eyes.

The knocking came first slow, steady and patient against the back door.

Knock.

Knock.

Knock.

She lay in bed, heavy and exhausted, the kind of tired that lived deeper than sleep. Her body refused to move. The sound echoed through the house like it had been waiting years to be heard.

“I’ll get it...” she tried to say, but her voice stayed trapped inside her chest.

When she forced herself upright, the world tilted. Her foot caught the edge of the bed and she fell hard onto the floor. The impact snapped through her like lightning. Her eyes opened. But she still couldn’t move. Outside her window, voices murmured and they were familiar voices. Keys jingled. The lock turned. The back door opened and then footsteps filled the house. Lola’s heart pounded as warmth spread through the air, replacing the quiet loneliness she had grown used to. Then she saw them. Her mother moved through the kitchen like she always had, busy hands already arranging decorations, straightening things that didn’t need straightening. Beside her stood Journey, her little sister, carrying bags that rustled with mystery.

Lola’s Mother: You’re finally up (her mother said casually, as if no time had passed at all.)

Lola stared. She hadn’t seen them in so long. Not like this. Not together.

Lola: What... what’s being celebrated?

Her mother only smiled and kept working. The house buzzed with preparation, laughter slipping through the walls like sunlight. Lola walked into the living room, half afraid they might disappear if she blinked too long. But they stayed. Real. Warm. Alive. Music began outside, soft at first, then growing louder. Curious, Lola stepped through the front door. And there he was leaning beside a car like no time had touched him. There stood Aries. One of her older brothers. For a moment she couldn't breathe. Life had scattered them into different states, different responsibilities, different versions of themselves. Years had passed in phone calls and missed holidays. But here he was.

Lola: Aries? (She whispered.)

He grinned. That was all it took. She ran. Her arms wrapped around him tightly, and he hugged her back just as hard. The feeling hit her instantly was safety, childhood & home. She laughed into his shoulder, overwhelmed by how right it felt.

Lola: I missed you!!!

Aries: I know! (He replied softly.)

And somehow, that felt like the truest thing ever spoken.

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The celebration grew as evening settled in. People filled the yard, music floating through warm air. Lights shimmered overhead like captured stars. But something tugged at Lola's chest. China one of her older sisters wasn't there. She pushed through the crowd, asking faces she barely recognized. Someone finally pointed toward the far end of the yard. And there she was. China turned just as Lola reached her, and they fell into each other's arms instantly a long, grounding hug that said everything words couldn't. They laughed as they walked through the party, fingers intertwined like when they were kids afraid of getting lost. Journey joined them, trailing behind, smiling. For a moment, Lola felt time fold. She remembered a summer afternoon long ago... All of them barefoot in the yard, chasing each other with water balloons, their laughter loud enough to drown out the future. Times were we would all be at home together watching movies and even times where we would fuss and fight and then be right back to normal moments later. Or even times when we had one another's back in times of trouble. No bills. No distance. No heartbreak. Just siblings collapsing into grass on fun days outside playing tag, promising they'd always stay this close. They had believed it then. They really had. Lola smiled at the memory before turning back to China.

Lola: Where's Aries? saw him earlier.

China stopped walking. Her expression changed to confusion spreading slowly across her face.

China: What do you mean?

Lola: I hugged him when you all got here. He was by the car.

China exchanged a glance with Journey. Something felt wrong.

China: Lola... (China said carefully.) He wasn't here.

A chill ran through Lola.

Lola: Yes he was. I hugged him!!!

China shook her head slowly.

China: He's gone.

The words landed heavy. Lola turned quickly.

Lola: Journey, tell her.

But Journey wasn't beside them anymore.

Lola: Where'd Journey go?

China's eyes softened with something that looked like sadness.

China: She wasn't here either.

The music faded. The lights dimmed. Lola's breath trembled as realization crept closer. She stepped back, looking at China carefully now.

Lola: ...Let me guess, (Lola whispered. Eyes filling with tears) You aren't here either... are you?

China's eyes filled with tears and understanding. She nodded. And then she disappeared. The party dissolved. The lights blinked out. The laughter vanished. Lola stood alone in the quiet yard, grief breaking open inside her chest as tears fell freely.

Lola: I JUST WANTED US TOGETHER AGAIN!!!! (She cried.)

The wind moved gently around her, warm and familiar. And for a brief moment, she heard laughter again... younger laughter. Four children running through sunlight. A voice echoed softly, not from outside, but from somewhere deep within her:

We never really left.

You just grew up.

Lola woke up crying, tears already soaking her pillow. The room was silent.

Empty...

But her chest felt different, heavy, yes, but also full, like something long locked away had finally been returned to her. On her bedside table sat her keys, catching the morning light. And for reasons she couldn't explain, she understood the message the dream had left behind... Some reunions don't happen in places. They happen in memory! Reminding you that love doesn't disappear with distance, time, or change.

It waits.

Quietly.

Inside the parts of you that still remember who you were when you were whole together.

THE END...