



Sam

Laurie Dalzell

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Sam

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For Stacy

Today made a year she was gone.

A year.

He looked around the apartment. So much was the same, but without her nothing would ever be as it had been.

The bed beckoned; the pillows deep, the blankets silver in the moonlight, offering him a solace he'd failed to find anywhere else since she'd been gone.

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Morning light washed the room in the soft shades of dawn.

Rob rolled over in the big bed. Sheets that would have been, should have been warmed by her were cool to his skin.

From the bedside table, her picture looked back at him. Her eyes were happy and laughing, her brown hair blown back from her face by a wind he couldn't feel. The lake behind her shimmered, calm and placid in the summer light.

How she'd loved the lake.

Suddenly, he could smell the pines and the fresh mountain air in the breath he sucked in. He could hear the lake birds, calling to each other from the trees that lined the shore, could hear her laugh ringing out as he slid on pine needles...

The alarm went off. The D.J.'s jargon abruptly brought Rob back to the present, jerking him away from the lake shore. Her laugh still echoing in his ears, Rob turned onto his back, his elbow covering his eyes as he prayed for the pain in his heart to ease its grip.

On the bedside table, the D.J. cut out midsentence to be replaced by guitar chords and words softly crooning the words of her favorite song.

*"If I could do what can't be done, tell you what no one knows."*

He held her pillow in his arms, curled himself into a ball around it.

*"I want to show you how to believe, help you let it go."*

Deep in his chest, his heart twisted.

In the cab on the way to work, the exotic music on the radio lulled him into a doze. The strains of the sitar faded, the song interrupted by the pop and crackle of static.

Her voice. *"Rob... Rob, I'm here... Rob..."*

The words were like cold water, waking him instantly. "Sam!" Her name erupted from him as his arms swung out to either side, slamming into the door on the left, the vinyl of the empty seat on his right. Rob's chest squeezed tight as he broke the surface of consciousness. His breath puffed as he looked around.

The cab. He was on his way to work.

And she was still gone.

"Sir? You are okay?"

Rob met the nearly black eyes of the cabbie staring at him in the rear view mirror. "Fine. I'm... fine." The words mumbled from his lips. He rubbed his hands through his hair as he leaned forward, elbows on his knees.

Oh, God, her voice...

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Tucked in his cubicle among so many others, he answered the phone automatically, fielding the questions of one client after another without needing to think.

"Corpus Credit Services. My name is Rob. How can I help you today?"

Nothing except the crackle-pop of static.

"Hello? Can I help you? We seem to have a bad connection."

Through the noise, he recognized the strum of chords, the softly sung words.

"If I could do what can't be done, tell you what no one knows"

"He-Hello?"

"I want to teach you to believe, help you let it go."

Rob punched the disconnect button and tore off his headset.

He had to get out of there.

Rain fell from gray skies as he left the building. Any cabs that pulled up were quickly filled and he just didn't have it in him to stake his claim to any of them. Rain sluiced over him on the long walk home, bringing to mind a year ago...

The deer in the road, just standing there. The wrenching pull in his arms as he swerved to avoid it. The screech of brakes on wet road. The steering wheel jerking out of his control as the car slid left, then right, finally leaving the pavement for the steep drop-off. The trees whipping at the windows before thinning out to nothing.

Nothing.

Nothing left to stop the car from tipping over the edge of the cliff.

Falling.

The horrible feeling of never-ending falling, and then the splash. The lake washing over the windshield. Sam's face, tight with fear on the mad careen down, down, now slack. Her eyes closed. How red the blood that trickled over her lashes from the gash in her forehead. How quickly the water came in...

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Standing in his living room, his fingers automatically pushed the buttons, bringing her music from the speakers, bringing to life the song that haunted him.

*"I miss the feel of your hand in mine, the taste of your skin on my lips."*

In the closet, her clothes still hung from the hangers, her scent still clinging to them. He held them to his face, breathing her scent deep. His tears landed in dark drops, spreading on the material.

*"The whisper of your breath in my ear, the shivering trace of your fingertips."*

"Oh, Sam." His voice broke, cracked, as grief drove him to his knees.

*"I miss the way you say my name..."*

"Rob"

*"Your voice bringing me home."*

"I'm here."

Her breath on his skin. He felt it. He knew he did. It was as real as the room around him, the music filling the apartment. His eyes wide, his gaze swung around the closet, her damp blouse clutched to his chest.

Nothing.

Shadows wavered in the muted light from the rain-streaked windows on the other side of the room.

He left the closet, made his way to the bed where he curled into a ball, her blouse tucked under his chin. His ears full of her song, he drifted on the currents of sleep.

*“Bringing me home... bringing me home...”*

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“Rob.” Sam’s fingers traced down the sides of his face. “Rob.” Her mouth on his. Her hands in his hair.

He opened his eyes. “Sam.”

She leaned over him, her hair swinging over the side of her face. “Shh...” She grabbed the short hem of her damp dress and pulled it off, over her head.

He could only look at her; her beautiful face silhouetted by the gray light of the rain outside. He ran a finger along the curve of a breast, down the ridges of her ribs, to reach around her back to pull her toward him.

“Sam. Oh, Sam.”

Her lips on his, caressing. Her tongue. Her taste...

“Sam.” Beneath his hands, her curves made his heart race. Her skin, smooth as silk, brought heat to his skin. Her touch took away the pain of the last twelve months, the pain that he’d thought would never leave.

She tugged off his shirt, unfastened his jeans. “I want to feel your skin on mine.”

Her body on his, the feel of her, a sensation that was lost to memory again made real.

Rob buried his face against her neck. His hands stroked the contours of her back, down to her thighs.

Her fingertips slid down his chest, over his stomach. The patter of the rain on the glass faded, disappeared, as desire shivered up his spine. Rob’s breath sucked in as her body covered his, her skin soft and warm. Tears flooded his eyes, blurred her image.

“I have missed you so much.”

“Shh...” She kissed his eyelids, her hands cupping his face, then brought her lips to his as she caressed him, gliding over the muscles of his shoulders to his hands.

Entwining his fingers with hers, he looked up into her face and drank her in. How beautiful she was; her eyes, her lips, the flush on her cheeks. His breath grew short. His heart pounded in his ears.

Sam leaned down to his ear. "Come with me."

"Anywhere."

Sam smiled, her lovely, beautiful smile, before kissing him again. He closed his eyes, the better to feel her. Her lips slowly, sensuously moved against his. Their legs tangled together, she rested her cheek on his chest. The thunder of his heart raced in his ears, then quieted and slowed.

From the living room, Sam's favorite song again played. *"If I could do what can't be done, tell you what no one knows."*

Her body was suddenly cool in his arms. Cold, wet streams ran off her, trickled across his chest and down his sides.

Rob opened his eyes.

Sam's face was ghostly pale staring down at him. The gash above her eye was a brilliant red ribbon emphasizing her pallor, the purple under her eyes.

"Come with me," said her blue lips.

"I want to teach you to believe..."

He closed his eyes as she kissed him. He tasted the lake on her lips, smelled the lake on her skin.

"Help you to let it go."

Felt the lake as its water washed over him.

"The way you say my name..."

Pulling him down.

"Your voice bringing me home."