

Broken

The wind was blowing hard and cold as the snow piled up in the darkness. I sat in my car, a nearly broken man. I hadn't slept in more than a day and my long, treacherous journey had left me weary. My car was just as beaten. I had driven for hours, most of the way through a mid-winter blizzard. By the time I pulled up in front of the cozy, little house I had a flat tire and a gas tank warning light flashing at me. My destination was before me though, only a few steps away. I stared at her red, front door through the snowy haze and tried to work up my courage. I knew what I wanted. I wanted her...forever and for always but telling her would be the hardest part of my journey yet.

I pulled my key from the ignition and the world suddenly grew quiet and lonely. The storm still blasted outside my window so I buttoned up my coat and pulled myself together with a deep, heavy inhale and exhale. I pushed open the car door, fighting the wind, and made my way across the yard. Each step proved to be a battle; a battle to keep my stiff, tired limbs moving and a battle against my poisonous negative thoughts. *You broke her heart once. She deserves better...step. Maybe you should wait. It might be easier later...step. What if she doesn't love you anymore? What if she says no?...step.* I was at the door. *Now or never* I told myself. I knocked on the hard, wooden door and my cold knuckles felt like they were going to crack and bleed. The few moments I waited felt like a thousand lifetimes trapped inside an icy hell. Salvation came when the doorknob began to turn and the door opened to reveal an angel waiting for me in an ocean of warmth and light.

"Come in." she told me with the most beautiful smile I had ever seen. I stepped into the house and could smell the woodstove burning. Her home was warm and inviting. I just wanted to lie down and rest but I couldn't, not yet. My journey wasn't over until I told her everything that was on my heart. I took off my snow covered clothes and she laid them aside to dry before leading me up the stairs to her bedroom. It was obvious from her dress that she had been ready to go to sleep but she had waited up for me. She wanted to hear about my trip. She asked question after question as we made our way to the room but my mind was on other things so my answers were short and obviously distracted. My adventures on

the road felt as if they were in my distant past. The daunting obstacles that had almost broken me seemed so trivial compared to the task at hand. She sensed my anguish. "Are you alright?" she asked, sitting on her bed with her caring, brown eyes looking up at me. "I'm fine." I said, even though I was starting to feel dizzy. "It's just...the things in the past...they don't matter anymore. I need to tell you something." She looked at me, worried and suspicious but attentive. "I love you." I continued; glad to see her smile again. "I've decided...I've decided not to move to Minnesota. No opportunity...great or small, is worth it if it means I'm...I'm without you." The words I had practiced so many times in the car did not come as easily as I had hoped but I pushed on "I want you. I want to be with you. I want "us" again." She was silent and it was killing me. "Well..." I finally said "Do you want to be with *me*?" Her perfect little mouth opened and one word hit me like a truck "No.". She said more; something about being happy with the way things were and needing to focus on herself for a while but I barely heard any of it. I was crumbling, mind and body. I was on the floor, the wind knocked out of me. My heart beat like a war drum at the hands of a soldier ready to die. I thought *I've come so far, fought so hard, only to lose in the end? How could this be?* "I'm sorry." I told her "I'm so sorry if I ever hurt you. I don't know what to do. Please..." I was sobbing uncontrollably. I was truly broken.

In an instant she was at my side, holding me. I felt like a fool but her caress soothed me. *Get it together* I thought *the fight isn't over yet*. I stopped my crying and forced myself to stand "I'm sorry." I said again, my head in my hands "I don't know what happened there. I'm so tired. You wouldn't believe the day I've had".

"Why don't you tell me about it." She smiled "You can stay here tonight. You shouldn't be driving in this weather anyway." She walked me over to the bed and we lay down together. We talked for a while and laughed about all the trials I'd been through just to reach her. She fell asleep before I did, even as exhausted as I was. She was so beautiful; I just wanted to look at her forever. I watched her sleep for a bit and thought about the love we'd once shared. *Our love isn't broken yet. The thread that holds it together is strong. She loves me. I love her. I can never give up on that again* I promised myself as I

drifted off to sleep beside her.

She was still hurt. I knew that. I had to make it up to her somehow and prove my love to her. I never gave up. I stayed by her side and slowly stitched up our love to make it whole again. Five years later she would become my wife and after ten years I love her more than ever. I knew what I wanted and I made a vow to have the courage to fight for it. Destiny smiled upon me for my strength and in the end I won. I won her love...forever and for always.