

"What are you writing?" Lorenzo, my best friend, questioned me. He leaned over, trying to peer over my shoulder. I looked at the title, *To Do Before I Leave*. I shut the notebook, giving him a smile. "It's nothing, just girl things." I responded, standing up off his bed. "Oh c'mon, Neva, you seem very secretive about these *girl* things." He crossed his arms over his chest, and I smiled and shook my head. "I'm serious!" I laughed out, slapping his arm. "You don't want to know."

Two days ago, my world was turned upside down. I was informed the cancer I developed as a kid had returned, and it spread. We thought it was gone, but we were wrong..and we didn't know until it was too late. The doctors tried, and they ran multiple tests. But there was no chance, the cancer had become too deadly. They gave me an option to take chemotherapy...but if I didn't, I would only live for another month. Of course, I knew chemotherapy was hell on earth, which is why I made the big decision to not do it. My parents were devastated, but they respected my decision.

There was one thing, though. I hadn't told Lorenzo. I didn't plan to, either. I didn't want him to treat me like everyone else did. Sick, pathetic, and different. I wanted my last month to be as normal as possible. But that was hard, since the pure thought that I would die in a month sent a shiver down my spine. Which is why I made a list. A list of all the things I wanted to do, or had yet to try, before I left. The list wasn't too crazy, of course, since I had very little time. But I was determined to check everything off.

For the next two weeks, I spent most of my time with Lorenzo. I knew he would be mad that I didn't tell him, but it was my only option. We had so much fun together, laughing and getting in trouble, dancing in the rain, and making memories. I made the decision to get a tattoo, and of course Lorenzo was by my side. It was a butterfly, and it was beautiful. "Why a butterfly?" He inquired, raising an eyebrow. I let out a slight chuckle, "Just thought it was pretty." I shrugged, looking down at the ink that decorated my skin.

The next week was harder than I imagined, the guilt weighed heavy on my shoulders, and I felt a horrible sense of dread. I had expected this, of course. But it hurt more than I thought it would. I checked off things on my list every few days, and I realized my time was drawing closer and closer. I got a new tattoo, dyed my hair a gorgeous purple color, went skydiving, and even solved a rubik's cube. All of which I did with Lorenzo. All this time I spent with him made me realize two things. Life is short, and I was in love with my best friend.

My final week. I had two more things on my list that I wanted to finish, cook something new, and go see the cherry blossoms in the park. I was easily able to cook something, so I chose to make dumplings. They were delicious, and I was proud of myself. I still wanted to do one more thing, before my time was cut short. I had 4 days left, and I showed up at Lorenzo's front door. He answered after a few knocks, and he looked dressed up. I raised an eyebrow, "Where are you going?" I asked, looking up at him. He shrugged, "Just out with the guys. What did you need, Neva?" I chewed on my lip, before a sad look enveloped my face. "Oh.." I whispered. "I was just wanting to see if you wanted to see the cherry blossoms."

He raised an eyebrow, before he came to a realization. "Neva, what is with you? You've been wanting to do all these new things. I'm sorry, but I'm not always going to be free to hang out with you. I have other friends." He stated, and I felt my heart ache. My lip quivered, and I tried to blink away the unwanted tears. "I'm sorry, Enzo. I-I just wanted to see them, but I'll let you go." I said quickly, using his nickname he's had since we were just in middle school. I then walked away, quickly getting in my car and driving home. Once I arrived, I sunk onto the floor by my door, letting my emotions spill out. I should've told him, he deserved

to know. I grabbed a piece of paper, and a pen. It happened to be a glittery pink one, but it didn't matter. I needed to do this before it was too late. I wiped my tears, and began writing a letter.

The next day, I was admitted to the hospital. My parents rushed to my house after I wasn't answering their calls, and I was found unconscious. For the next two days, I stayed in the hospital. I was alive, but they assumed I would be in a coma. I could hear every word, and every tear shed by my parents. I held on, thinking and waiting for one certain person. I needed to hear his voice, to know he was okay. And until then, I would fight.

Finally, just when I thought he wouldn't show up, he bursted through the room's doors. I could hear his gasp, and his shaky breathing. I felt a warm hand on mine, and I knew it was him. "Why didn't you tell me?" I heard him cry out, and I wanted to show him I was listening, in any way. But I couldn't. "You idiot, you can't leave me." He hugged me, his arms wrapping around me as I felt his tears fall against my skin. I smiled eternally. I could go now, I could be at peace now that I heard his voice. *Don't forget me, Enzo.*

*The machines went off as Neva slowly drifted away, her heartbeat slowing down until there was nothing left. Her mother cried out as her father wrapped his arms around her. Doctors rushed in, pushing Lorenzo to the side. They did everything they could, they compressed and tried to save her life. But it was no use. She was gone, and Lorenzo watched in horror as the life drained from his best friend.*

*Lorenzo returned home that night, everything feeling like a horrible nightmare. He didn't want to believe it. His best friend truly was gone. He sank to the floor by his bed, holding his head in his hands as he cried out. He couldn't make it without her, and he realized how bad he messed up. He should've told her he loved her, should've said goodbye. He never should've pushed her away, and he should've taken her to see the cherry blossoms. He laid miserably in bed for the next few days, not leaving his house. He was devastated, and he had no hope left.*

Lorenzo heard a knock on his door as he laid in bed, staring at the ceiling. He groaned, before rolling out of bed and stumbling to the door. His hair was messy, and there were deep dark circles under his eyes. He opened the door to see Neva's mom. She smiled at him, before handing him a folded up piece of paper with his name on it. "We found this in her room." She spoke with a sad look, before pulling Lorenzo into a hug..and then taking her leave.

As soon as she was gone, he unfolded the paper with tears in his eyes. His heart ached as he saw the sparkly pink gel pen, and as he read his tears fell onto the paper. Neva explained everything in the letter, about her sickness and how sorry she was for not telling him. She explained the list, and why she wanted to do those things. And finally, she confessed her feelings for him. By the time Lorenzo was done reading, he was sobbing. He knew what he had to do.

He wiped his tears, before putting his shoes on and running out the door. He ran and ran, until he stood in the middle of the park. He let out a gasp at the sight. The sidewalk was covered in fallen cherry blossoms, the trees blowing in the wind. He smiled, now knowing why Neva wanted to go so bad. His eyes teared up, and he began to hate himself for not taking her. He looked down at the ground, his tears falling to the ground and landing on a pink petal. Suddenly, the sun came out, making Lorenzo squint. He lifted his head, and immediately gasped. There were hundreds of butterflies flying around the trees, their wings black as they fluttered around him. There was one that stuck out, and it came and flew in front of him. It was a beautiful butterfly with purple wings. Lorenzo's eyes widened as he suddenly realized, a tear rolling down his cheek. He smiled, knowing that although she was gone..she would always be with him.