

Last Day

Julie pulled the blanket up a little higher over her and AJ. At some point in the darkest hours of the night, she had gone inside long enough to grab a throw blanket off the couch. It was almost dawn. AJ had insisted they stay out long enough to watch the sunrise together. Julie had tried to protest, insisting he needed to get some sleep. But he won. She knew she had dosed on and off a bit throughout the night, her head on his warm chest.

They had done a lot of talking. AJ gave her the full rundown of his addictions and relapses. And Julie told him all about her lifestyle and job. He had pointed out that since she was use to traveling for conventions, there was going to be no excuses for them not to spend time together. Her heart soared at the prospect. He even teased her about her and Kate joining them on the cruise.

All Julie could think about as he spoke was that he really would come back for her.

As the pink and orange colors began to take over the sky, AJ pulled her even tighter. He kissed the top of her head as she sighed with appreciation for the beauty of the morning. Each morning, when she would watch the sunrise, she would be reminded of this moment.

At 7 am Kate's phone alarm went off. As she crawled across Nick to grab it she forgot about her wrist. She yelped in pain waking Nick up.

"You ok?"

"Yeah just forgot about my wrist. Can you hand me my phone?" She asked.

He rolls over grabbing it from the nightstand and handed it too her. She turned it off but stayed sitting upright, knowing if she was to lay back down she'll fall right back asleep.

"So why were we getting up this early?" Nick yawns.

"You can sleep a little longer but I have to pack."

She climbed out of the bed heading to the bathroom to brush her teeth. She ran her fingers thru her hair as she gazed in the mirror. Bed head. She would need Julie's help to straighten to unruly waves that came naturally as her hair dried. It was that or wash it again. She sighed she grabbed

her toothbrush. Nick came in behind her. He looked even more tired than she felt. After she got done brushing her teeth she looked at his reflection in the mirror.

"Maybe it's a good thing you are going back to work." She said a teasing grin on her face.

"Why?" He says around his toothbrush.

"Well maybe you can get some sleep again."

He laughs. After rinsing he continues, "I'd rather be with you than sleep."

He pulled her in for a morning kiss. Kate's fingers slide up into his hair.

When he pulled away he gazed down into her hazel eyes.

"Damn I'm going to miss you." He said.

Kate smiled, "I'm going to miss you too."

She pulled away to start gathering her toiletries to pack.

Nick had quickly shoved all his things in his duffle bag and sat on the bed watching Kate pack.

"Could you do me a favor?" She asked.

"Sure."

"Could you go get our clothes out of the dryer?"

Nick laughed.

"I totally forgot about them." He confessed.

"Yeah that's part of why I didn't want you take them down in the first place."

"Part?" He asked pausing in the doorway, "What's the other part?"

Kate rested back on her heels where she was kneeling next to her suitcase.

"Well Julie makes it sound like a big deal to have clothes that smell like horse but mine usually do so it's no big deal to me."

Nick laughed. He could see both girls' points of view on that. But it made him love Kate even more, that she didn't care. When she tried to stand up, he offered her a hand. But he didn't let go once she stood. He pulled her into his embrace, breathing her in as she pressed her soft body to his. The next few weeks were going to be hell. Not only did they have the rest of the NKOTBSB tour, but he had his own promoting to do, while in Canada. It would be almost a month before he would be done and able to see her again. He wanted to share this with her, but worried about how much harder it would be if she had a more definite time frame.

He reluctantly let her go so she could finish packing up. He could smell the sweet smell of Kate's fru fru coffee being brewed downstairs and knew that at least AJ was up and moving. He kissed Kate on the cheek and excused himself to go make a cup for each of them.

Julie walked past him, on her way to her room, rubbing her eyes as if she was tired.

"Morning, Nick," she whispered as she passed him. He just smiled and nodded at her. Once downstairs, he saw AJ standing in front of the coffee maker, in only his boxers and a tee shirt. Nick laughed.

"Its nice to see that you are that comfortable here. You look like you are at home."

AJ just looked at him, a sheepish grin on his face.

"Man, I am home."

Nick agreed.

"I think this is one of the best days of my life, and the worse." He didn't have to explain. AJ knew exactly what Nick meant. He felt the same way.

"So," AJ said, stepping out of the way of the coffee maker, so Nick could make a cup. "Will you be my sponsor if I be yours?"

Nick looked at him confused.

"What do you mean?"

AJ looked down at his feet, obviously embarrassed.

"This is gonna be hard. I already can feel the pain in my chest from being away from her. How am I gonna make it through this? I'm afraid."

Nick could see how hard it was for his friend to admit. AJ was letting him know he worried he would drink to ease the pain. But Nick had thought the same things of himself, but he knew all he had to do to ease the pain would be to call Kate. Her voice was his drug. He got high just being in her presence. There was nothing in the world that would drive him to drink again. He thought the cardiomyopathy scare would be enough, but now he had something incredible to live

each day for. Nick explained this to AJ but let him know he would still be there, as his brother and his best friend, if he needed help.

“I don’t think you have anything to worry about. But I do think you should tell Julie about your fears. I have no doubt that she would be there to support you. If you fall, I think she will be there to pick you up. Just have faith.”

AJ was so grateful for the friendship he had with Nick. Although all of the guys were friends, Nick was the one who understood him best. Nick had fallen apart when AJ had gone through rehab the first time. He was the only other one who had taken the wrong road and now they stood side by side, on the right path to a healthier life. They encouraged each other.

AJ picked up his cup of coffee, as well as Julie’s hot cocoa she forgot, and headed upstairs. Nick was right. He needed to tell Julie. He hated to admit it to himself but he was afraid this conversation would be the one that turned her away from him. His heart beat wildly in his chest with the prospect. He took a deep breath as he entered her oversized master suite.

Julie was dressed in denim capri pants and a top that reminded him of the sunrise they had just witnessed, with the shades of yellow and orange and pinks it had. She was putting on her make-up. He held out her coffee mug to her, as a peace offering, then he sat on the rim of the bathtub, watching her.

“Julie,” he started. “I think we need to talk.” Julie stopped mid eyeliner. When a guy said that, it was never good. She finished the eye she was doing, grateful she had already done the other one, and turned to look at him.

“Okay,” she said, elongating the word. “What do you wanna talk about?” She wanted to keep looking at him, but he was looking down into his coffee.

“I need to talk to you about something.”

Julie waited for him to continue. When he didn’t, she put the make-up brush down on the counter and stepped up to him. She put one finger under his chin and lifted his head up.

“Sweetie. You know you can tell me anything.”

He finally looked up at her, his eyes rimmed with red.

“I have never felt like this. It hurts, just thinking of not having you there. I wasn’t joking when I told you my heart is beating for the first time. I haven’t even left yet and the pain is unbearable.”

Julie kissed his cheek. “It will be okay. You said so yourself. Just a few weeks and the tour will be over.”

“But in the meantime? I don’t know what to do? What if I start drinking to ease the pain?”

Julie could see in his eyes he was seriously concerned over the fact. It was very likely he could relapse. But she had faith in him.

“Alex. All you have to do is call me. If you think you might have a drink, I don’t care what time it is, call me. And if you do succumb and drink, don’t hide it. Tell Nick, tell Brian, tell me, but don’t hide it. That would not be the way to handle it. Baby, I love you. I want you to know that. And I will be here for you.”

AJ sighed, a sound of relief. He would make it through. The pain in his chest had lighten just by talking to her. He set his coffee cup on the floor and stood, pulling Julie into his arms.

“Where were you 15 years ago?” he teased.

“In love with New Kids on the Block,” she laughed.

“Well, for once, I am so glad you were. Otherwise, I may never have met you.”

Kate felt bad as she watched Nick carry her suitcase down the stairs and put it in the car. She tried to explain to him that she would have to do it all alone when she got home, but he insisted.

“I am at your beck and call until we part, so suck it up,” he teased.

They had gotten everyone's things in the trunk and were just about to leave. Julie wanted to run back in and make sure she had locked all the doors.

Julie stood at the French doors of her top balcony, looking out at her pool. She was surprised when warm, strong arms wrapped around her. AJ placed his chin on her shoulder.

"Soon," he whispered in her ear. She turned her head to be able to kiss him.

"I know." She sighed. "I don't want to leave, but we really need to get you guys to the airport. Brian and Howie, not to mention 15,000 fans, would be out to kill me if you don't show up tonight."

She could feel his body move when he laughed.

"Yeah. I hate to say it, but you are right." He took her hand and led her outside.

The car ride to the airport was mostly quiet. No one wanted to talk about the inevitable. Since Kate's flight would leave almost two hours after the guys, Julie had planned to stay and keep Kate company in the small food court area, so she pulled into the covered parking garage. Julie had been there enough times to know where the best place to park would be.