

## **small moments of love that are so fleeting but can stay with you forever**

### **1. The moment that got away**

There he was, walking towards her. She smiled as they made eye contact, her heart skipping a beat when he returned it. He was coming closer now, just a few feet away. She panicked, her mind whirling. What should she do? Smile, wave, say something? When he was practically in front of her, he smiled, suppressing her turmoil. He said something that made her throw her head back and laugh, the noise ringing down the halls. They both never stopped moving, continuing down the path to their destination. She replied with a quick quip as she passed him, one of her fingers reaching out the tiniest bit to see if it could catch his skin—a little touch that would keep her heart going for days and days. All she grasped was air. As they faced straight once more, her head turned to see if he was looking. He wasn't. It made her smile waver before dropping completely. So, she kept walking, away from him and to whatever awaited her next.

### **2. The “do you remember?” moment**

He painstakingly put on his old, battered running shoes, the same ones she had gotten him for his sixtieth birthday. They had just started going on their daily walks around the neighbourhood, and she had gotten him a new pair of sneakers to make the steps easier. He huffed out a sigh as he bent over, tying the laces. He could hear his bones creak as he moved and his skin stretch as he smiled. But it never affected him—he had long accepted the aging process. He stepped outside, his wife right by his side. As they circled the houses, they pointed out the little things: the baby blue trim painted on the neighbouring house she thought they should try out at home, the tulips growing along the roads matching the ones on their dining room table, the people chatting and laughing under the bright sunny sky. Finally, they reached their favourite park, taking a seat on Their Bench as they rested their legs. He leaned back and closed his eyes, basking in the sun rays that coated his face with warmth. When he opened them once more, he turned his head, wanting to tell his wife about something that had been on his mind—a random thought about an old memory. But the spot where she usually sat was empty, and that feeling of emptiness and loneliness came flooding back. Yet for that brief moment of time, he had felt her presence. Knowing that she would never leave him.

### **3. The moment when you know, you know**

Hesitant steps guided her into the room. Sounds of chatter, plates and cutlery clinking, and soft music flooded her senses. It did nothing to make her feel better; in fact, her nerves heightened at the thought of so many people in that small space interacting together—and her being expected to do the same. Her mind flickered to the thought that at least *he* would be there. She steeled her resolve and pushed her way inside. When she stepped deeper inside, she was immediately engulfed into a sea of bodies. Faceless people called out her name and greetings.

She responded with perfunctory nods and how-are-you's. She picked a flute of champagne off the tray a server was flaunting around and downed the entire thing in one gulp. Clutching the glass stem tightly, her head swiveled as she searched with a frantic edge. With every pair of eyes she passed, she couldn't locate the familiar brown gaze she always seemed to lose herself in. Finally, *finally*, she spied that thick head of brown hair, the one that towered just slightly above the rest. She had somehow missed him the first time around. As she caught his eyes and gentle smile, her lungs drew in their first real breath of air. She knew that now she had found him; she was going to be okay.

#### **4. The moment where a mother's love knows no bounds**

The light turned on in her room. It didn't help matters that she had been interrupted in the middle of her crying, eyes red and puffy, the taste of salt and sadness on her tongue. She remained buried under the covers, her face deep in her pillow to the point where she almost felt suffocated. A step into her room, then the sound of her door gently closing shut. Based on the tread on the carpet, she recognized her mother. Shame coursed through her at being caught in such a vulnerable position. She had meant to cry quietly, so that no one in the house heard. She had also assumed everyone was asleep, but she must not have been as discreet as she thought. She held her breath as her mother inched closer to the bed until she stopped right at the foot of it. Her mother's silhouette hovered over her. She tensed, waiting for a reprimand, a question, confusion, concern. But none of that came. Instead, the bed dipped as her mother sat on the edge, right by her side. A hand came to rest soft and comforting on the back of her head, stroking through her hair with slow, practiced movements. The action became her undoing, and the floodgates broke back open. She sobbed for an undetermined amount of time, until her eyes were sore and her lungs were gasping for air. Her mother held her close the entire time.

#### **5. The what-if moment**

She was pushing her cart down the grocery store aisle when she spotted a young couple up ahead and stopped dead in her tracks. They looked enamored with each other. The man pushed the woman up against the shelves of food, eliciting a wide grin on his lover's face. Belatedly, she realized that she was staring, and turned quickly to face the shelves. Her face burned with embarrassment as if she had gotten caught watching something she wasn't supposed to. Out of the corner of her eye, her gaze fixated on the couple, and her mind drifted to the thoughts that had accompanied her for so long. Even at her middle age, she had experienced so much of life and had grown accustomed to being by herself. But there were times when she wondered, even if just briefly, what could have been. What could have been if she focused less on her career in her twenties and went out more, making those missed connections. What could have been if she tried harder on dates, giving an actual relationship a chance. What could have been if she hadn't learned to close her heart off at an early age, heartbroken from the one man who managed to scale her defenses—but left her behind for a better future. The stab in her chest pushed her attention away from the couple, who had now moved on and began walking away.

Grabbing a box of cereal off the shelf and placing it in her cart, she sighed as she returned to her mundane reality. There was no use wondering about what could have been. There was only the now, and right now: she was alone.