

Broken.

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INT. HOSPITAL

We see a man sitting in a neurologist's office. He looks to be in his mid 30's, in fact he's 27-aged by days of fatigue and worry. He has strong features with startling grey eyes which turn hard and piercing in deep thought. He had zoned off looking past the model of the human brain that sat on top of the doctor's desk. His phone vibrated and snapped him back to life. It was his brother. He slid the phone open and put it to his ear.

The voice on the other side of the phone said: Hey

Man: Hey Andrew.

Andrew: You at the hospital yet? (he said in a concerned voice)

Man: Yeah, I'm waiting for the doctor right now

Andrew: Oh....I see.....call me later?

Man: Yeah okay.

The door opens and the doctor comes in, already sweating from anticipation.

He stretched out his hand, "How've you been Markus?"

Markus clasped the doctor's hand and shook it, "Not as well as I used to be I'm afraid."

Doctor: "Hows the leg? Worse?"

Markus: "Yes, but its manageable."

The doctor took a seat in his desk and opened the manila colored folder he had been holding.

He shifted through the papers, "Your neurological responses are slow, we went over the CAT scan of your brain and...."

Markus cut him off," Do I have Lou Gehrig's disease?"

Hesitation.

Doctor: "Yes, I'm terribly sorry."

Markus's stomach churned and nausea swept throughout his entire body. He swallowed.

Markus: "How did I get it?"

Doctor: "We're not sure"

Markus: "How long do I have?"

The doctor told him. It wasn't long.

Doctor: "The disease is progressing at a very rapid rate."

Silence.

He had heard about Lou Gehrig's disease before, the fatal disease of the neurological system that left the victim trapped inside his own body. He had even remembered telling himself, "Glad I don't have this."

Cruel, cruel irony.

They went through his future plans and schedules. The doctor told him he had to come back for weekly checkups, he agreed. Markus thanked him and opened the door with shaking hands to begin the long journey up the stairway to heaven, no one had told him these stairs were made out of broken glass.

INT.MARKUS”S CAR- A couple weeks later.

Markus sat in his car, stuck in traffic-multiple thoughts running through his head. He couldn’t put it off any longer, he had to tell his brother. Sigh, his *damned* brother.

Markus argued with himself: “I could turn back right now. I could just.....no, no I cant.”

He drummed his fingers on the car wheel and looked at the unchanging red traffic light.

Markus: Hurry up, Hurry up, Hurry up.

He started to swear, then he stopped.

Markus: “Huh, Ill never be able to complain about traffic again.”

He looked around outside at all the angry, frustrated faces, and glaring eyes.

What’s THEIR hurry, he thought. They have all the sweet time in the world.

The light turned green and he zoomed down the street.

But not me.

INT. BROTHER’S HOUSE

Markus’s brother: “So what’s that disease your dying of again? Old age?” He grinned. It nearly broke Markus’s heart. Markus walked to the living room and tried to sit in his brother’s tattered old couch. His leg refused to bend all the way so he let his body fall down into it.

Markus: “Where’s the wife?”

Andrew:” Oh, she’s out shopping for dinner. She thinks you look malnourished. Haha, You’re coming later right?”

Markus: “yeah, yeah, of course.”

Andrew walked to the kitchen and peeked his head out the doorway that connected the kitchen to the living room.

:”You want anything?”

Markus: “No....I’m good. Hey....Andy?”

Andrew: “Hmmm?” He walked into the living room with a beer in his hand.

Markus struggled to get the words out of his mouth.

Markus:”I.....I’M DYING ANDY. GOD, IM DYING.”

He broke down and covered his face with his hands. He cried, bodyracking cries. But Markus only imagined doing this. He told Andrew he had to get back to work and that he would come over some other time. Andrew followed him to the front door and stood against the doorframe while he watched his older brother stumble into his car and out the driveway.

INT.MARKUS'S CAR

With one hand on the wheel he reached up to clear his hair out of his eyes. His shoulder felt tense and stiff. He parked his car next to a nearby public park and ran his right hand through his unkempt, dark brown hair and exhaled. He heard the distant sound of children's laughter and muffled conversations of the people walking by. He rubbed his shoulder and looked at the time. He was late for his doctor's appointment.

He put his car into drive and started to the hospital. He reached a downhill road and his car started accumulating speed. He was approaching a busy intersection.

Break, I need to break. He thought.

He tried to press down on the break, his leg wouldn't respond.

Break, Break! He looked wildly around at the road in front of him.

Markus:"I CAN'T MOVE. I CAN'T MOVE! WATCH OUT !"

As if the drivers could hear him.

People started honking, and the car horns were screaming at him. High pitched, carried out screams. He felt something punch him, square in the stomach knocking the wind out of his lungs.

Everything went white.

Flashback.

We see two teenage boys walking home from school, side-by-side. They're both carrying big, black backpacks on their shoulders and both have the same mousy brown hair.
(We pick up mid conversation)

The younger one laughs(Andy) laughs: Okay, okay. How about this, there's a fire in the house and you can only save one thing. Your life savings, or the dog?

Markus: Sammy. My life savings are only about 30 dollars anyways because YOU keep borrowing money from me.

Andrew: Fine, fair enough. Hey, Me or Sammy?

Markus: You kidding? Of course I'd choose Sammy over you. (He grinned)

Andrew scoffs and pretends to be hurt. He quiets down and thinks for a while.

Andrew: Me...or mom? He says slowly.

They stop walking and the atmosphere takes on a more serious tone.

Markus whispers: You.

Andrew: Me....or dad?

The whisper only gets softer: You.

Andrew peers up at his older brother and they look at another with solemn eyes as if they had made a silent agreement and start to walk back home. Both feeling as if they had somehow betrayed their parents.

Markus woke up to the constant beep beep of a heart rate monitor.

Guess I'm at the hospital he thought.

He opened his eyes and he involuntarily flinched. *Too bright*. He blinked a couple of times and when he regained his vision he saw Andrew standing at the foot of his bed.

Andrew: Hey, Mark. You awake?

Markus nodded and looked over to his left at Charlene(Andrew's wife) who was sleeping on the chair next to him with her chin in her hand.

Andrew: Hey Mark, he said again.

Andrew was twiddling with Markus's blanket. He stopped and looked up at Markus. Markus was surprised to see his eyes were red rimmed.

Andrew: ALS huh? (The other term for Lou Gehrig's disease)

Markus: So you know....?

Andrew: Doctor told me today, said the car accident was because you lost the motor responses in your leg.

Markus opened his mouth to say something but shut it again.

Andrew: Why didn't you tell me Mark? Why didn't you tell me about it you damn fool.

Markus looked down at his hands: I couldn't bring myself to.

Andrew: And you thought me being in the dark was better? Well wasn't that stupid of you Huh? So what were you going to do Mark? Act like you were fine until you up and died alone somewhere?

Andrew's voice has escalated.

Andrew: What would have happened if you died today? How could you do that to me man? You stupid sonofabitch. Don't leave me Markus, what do you want me to do without you?

Hot, angry tears rolled down his face and Andrew quickly wiped them off with the sleeve of his shirt.

Markus spoke: You know....I won't be able to move soon? I won't be able to touch my own face, I won't be able to dress myself, or feed myself.....

Mark turned over on his side, facing towards the wall and away from Andrew.

Markus: (his voice broke) I won't be able to speak soon either. I won't even be able to speak to you.

He blinked back tears, one escaped and slid across his face and off his nose.

Markus sobbed: The only thing I can do by myself is blink. That's all I can do Andy.

He felt ashamed. A grown man like him blubbering like a baby.
But he had every right to.

Andrew sniffed, and wiped his face again.

Andrew: Well then that's a relief! I was getting sick of hearing your voice anyways.

That's a lie. Markus thought. *I know that's not true Andy. I know.*

Charlene coughed and stood up. She walked up to Andy and took his elbow in her hand. She stared at him with disapproving eyes.

Charlene: I'm sorry Markus. We'll come back tomorrow okay?

She led Andrew out of the room and the nurses finally came in.

One looked at Andrew's face and then at Markus.

Nurse: Hey! Look who's finally awake. (in a cheery voice)

Markus closed his eyes and repeated to himself. *I know that's not true Andy....I know.*

INT.ANDREW'S HOUSE.

Charlene and Andrew are sitting on the dining room table. She had fixed dinner but Andrew's plate had been left untouched.

No one had said a word for a while.

Charlene finally spoke: Your being selfish you know.

Charlene: Markus is the one suffering and all you can worry about is yourself.

You have no right. No right at all to be angry at that man.

Andrew stayed silent. He looked up at his wife with pleading eyes.

What should I do? They said.

Charlene understood. She reached over and put her hand into his.

Charlene: You should go Andrew.

He didn't wait another second. He stood up and took off.

INT. HOSPITAL.

Andrew reached the room that Markus was in. He placed his hand on the doorknob, took a breath and opened the door. Markus was still in the same position that Andrew had left him in-on his side facing the wall. Andrew walked in but Markus had made no sign that he had heard him.

Andrew: You know you could have used your other leg, genius.

Markus turned his head and looked up at his brother. He tried pull himself up but his arms started to shake from the effort. Andrew walked towards Markus and helped him up. He took a seat on the edge of the bed next to Andrew's feet.

Markus: Give me a break I was panicking.

Andrew gave a weak smile.

Andrew: Hey Mark...I'm sorry....really. I was just...

Markus shook his apology away with one hand: I understand.

Andrew looked around the room to keep himself occupied. He looked at his brother and widely smiled. His eyes lit up from sudden remembrance.

Andrew: Hey, he said softly. Me....or the dog?

Markus chuckled and shook his head.

Andrew: Me....or mom?

Markus: You.

Andrew: Me...or dad?

Markus: You, he said quietly.

Andrew whispered: Me too you damn idiot.....Me too.