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His Imaginary friend

Rory died when she was eight years old. She was buying daisies. Rory's favorite. She ran in front of a car to push a little boy out of the way. The last thing she saw was the color of his hair. Strawberry blonde. It was quick and painless. Before she knew it, she was rising up, the horrified faces of her parents looking down at something that was too far for her to see. Maybe that was for the best.

She finally stopped rising when she saw a golden light above her head and she became surrounded by clouds. They were fluffy and the color of fresh snow. She heard a voice. It had a sweet and caring tone. "Welcome, dear child," it said.. Rory was confused and thought to respond. "Ah yes, you did die. But you died for a noble cause." The voice read her thoughts. "You'd rather die yourself than let another child die. That's why I'm giving you this honor."

"Honor?" Rory found her voice.

"Yes. When an adult dies for someone, they become a guardian angel. Children, on the other hand, become imaginary friends for as long as they need you," the voice said. "His name is Weston Truett."

"When do I start?" Rory asked.

"Why right now, of course." Rory began falling. Down, down, down. She landed in a boy's room. It seemed to be a few weeks after the accident. The boy was staring. He wasn't playing with toys or reading, just staring at nothing in particular. Rory cleared her throat. The boy, Weston, she supposed, turned.

"Who are you?" Weston sneered.

“Your friend.” Rory's voice sounded echoey and distorted.

“I don't have friends. Everybody hates me.”

“Not me.” Rory's voice wasn't her own.

“Well I hate you.”

Rory felt hurt. “Why?” She asked.

“You'll hate me, so I'll hate you first. Go away.”

“I won't hate you. Hate is a strong word.”

“It's a strong feeling too.” He turned around and started again.

“You're mean.” Rory folded her arms.

“No I'm not. Just honest.” There was a knock at his door.

“Westy,” It was his father. “When are you coming to lunch?”

“I'm not!” Weston yelled at his father. “I told you already,” he snarled.

“Why are you so mean to him?” Rory asked.

“He deserved it.” Weston caught himself. “And I'm not mean.”

Rory and Weston sat there in silence for a few hours. Rory was feeling completely helpless. She recommended playing a few games, but Weston shut her down every time. She felt helpless, but not

hopeless. Rory had always been mature for her age, much more mature than most adults. Her maturity grew from her refusal to abandon hope.

A few hours passed until the sky was a soft shade of evening blue between morning and night. They heard another knock. "Son. Are you ready for the funeral?" his father asked.

"I am *not going!*" Weston screamed.

His father made a small noise of frustration, but kept patience in his voice. "You have to. That girl saved your life."

"I won't go!" The father clenched his fist and walked away. He had abandoned hope.

Minutes passed and they heard a car drive off. Rory couldn't take it anymore. "What was that!?" Rory yelled. Weston looked confused. "You're not going to the funeral?!" Weston didn't answer. "I lost my *life* to save you and you're not even going to my *funeral?!?*" Rory was screaming now. "Why? Tell me *why* you refuse to be kind. Be honest!"

"No! Honesty hurts too much!" Weston was yelling. "It's my fault she's dead!" He was trembling all over.

"It's my fault *you're* dead." He wasn't yelling anymore. His last sentence came out as a croak.

Rory was taken aback. "You knew it was me?" she asked.

"Yes. I saw you," his voice broke further. "on the sidewalk. And it's my fault." He said in his shattering voice

"You might blame yourself, but I don't blame you," she said.

"Blame doesn't change responsibility," Weston said.

“It's not your fault. Not responsibility either.”

Weston began to cry. His tears flowed down his face in rivers, each one accompanying it's own heart-shattering sob.

“Really?” he sniffled. He could barely speak through his broken voice.

“Really.”

They sat together, comforting each other as they sobbed. Both are so young yet so wise. Too wise and too young.

The next day Weston asked his father to bring them to the cemetery. He brought daisies. Rory's favorite.

The sky was the yellow and oranges of the sunset Rory missed so much. They found Rory's grave.

Freshly dug from the night before. 'Rory Crawford. Never abandon hope.' Her stone read. Weston placed the daisies on it. Rory's favorite. She began to disappear. Her body slowly shimmering away, piece by piece.

Weston and Rory smiled at each other. “Goodbye,” he whispered His imaginary friend, the girl who taught him to love and accept himself and to never carry guilt that wasn't his. His best friend.

The last thing Rory saw was the boy's hair. Strawberry blonde.