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The Fault in Our Stars

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1 Year Later...

I am lying on Augustus' death bed, soon to face his fate.

The cancer has caught up with me. The question is: When did I stop running?

I've been laying in the hospital bed with my eyes closed, not wanting to talk to my parents; not wanting to see their fake smiles that mask their anguish and fear.

My parents have always been supportive and helpful through the whole my-daughter-is-dying-of-lung-and-thyroid-cancer thing. They've been my shoulders to cry on. They are all I have left now.

I wish I could say that I was okay after Augustus' death, that I moved on easily, but I would be lying. Nobody who loses someone close to them is necessarily sane afterwards, but it was different with me. He was the love of my life, my best friend, and the reason I got up in the morning all at once. I wasn't living until I met him; I was merely surviving. I went through the actions of everyday life in a zombified daze. I had no social life and spent my free time in my room or on the couch. Then, when Augustus popped into my life, I was thriving.

He wasn't just my true love or best friend. He was something to me that I cannot possibly fathom into words. He was the one who woke me up and showed me how to live.

And now I am drowning in my own skin, the tumors pulling me under the water and holding me there. I hear the machines' beeping get louder and faster. The doctors rush into the room, messing with tubes and other tools. I can vaguely hear the sound of my mother crying.

Little do I know that it is one of the last things I will ever hear.

Suddenly, I am overtaken by a blinding light, and tears stream down my cheeks, but it isn't painful. I'm not crying because it hurts, I'm crying because it is beautiful and glorious. I am certain that the feeling it is the most peaceful and carefree that I've felt in years. It is almost...heavenly. I find myself not wanting the light to clear; not wanting to

return to the torture that is my life. I don't know how or why this light has appeared, but I know that I never want it to go away.

The light dims slightly, but that wonderful feeling lingers. I can see my hospital room, but the doctors and machines are gone. I can no longer hear the agonized sobs of my mother and father, and I sit in the quiet gentleness of the light.

It takes me a few minutes to realize that there is someone in my room. It takes me a few seconds after that to realize who it is.

"Augustus," I breathe. My voice is almost inaudible. A wave of happiness floods through me, but is quickly diminished as I realize why he is here.

He looks different, but not unfamiliar. In fact, he is wearing the clothes he was wearing when I met him. His straight, short, mahogany hair was no differently styled than when she'd first seen him. He was the same height and had that same invincible air around him, like he was going to save the world one day.

"Hello, Hazel Grace. It's a pleasure to see you again," he says with his clear, confident smile.

I can't breathe. I can't move.

His smile turns into a frown. "Hazel Grace, do you know why I'm here?"

I do know. As soon as I saw him, I knew.

"I'm dead," I say, my voice cracking.

His head falls. "I'm so sorry. I didn't want to be the one to...to take you away," he says, like he's telling me we're heading to the gallows.

"Where?" I whisper. I can't do more than whisper right now.

"I don't know," he takes a step toward her. "I'm sorry, Hazel."

"But, what about my parents..."

He says nothing.

The light is getting brighter, a welcoming beacon; a deadly glare.

I look at him. He is so beautiful, and I love him so much; I never stopped loving him after he'd died. I hope that my parents will feel the same way.

I have to trust him. He was the only one I can trust right now.

"Okay," I hear myself say. I reach out and take his strong hand in my own.

He smiles, "Okay."