

Luke

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Based on a True Story

INT. AMA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

We pan across a petite bedroom. There are photos lined along the wall, and at a closer look, we see a girl posing with various groups of people: a cluster of friends similar to her age, her parents, and a boy in a wheelchair smiling vaguely at the camera. Then, a figure under the bedsheets starts to stir and a pair of feet suddenly land on the hardwood floor beside the bed. AMA (18) is awake.

Yawning violently, Ama makes her way to the door of her bedroom and heads down the hall.

INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ama bursts into her twin brother LUKE'S bedroom.

AMA
(smiling)
Hi Luuuke! How are we doing this morning?

Luke is sitting on his ankles in the middle of the floor. His head hangs low as he looks down at his toy piano, struggling to play the keys accurately. His hand bounces across the keyboard, wildly unsure of which note it should play.

Ama kneels down next to him and gives him a hug.

AMA
Today, we have so much planned! You're gonna go for a walk, maybe do some physical therapy, watch a movie...

Luke finally lifts up his head and slowly turns to look at his sister. After a moment, he grins and lets out a COOING noise.

Ama smiles and rubs Luke's back.

AMA
Alright buddy I'll check in on you later.

Ama stands up and exits Luke's room, closing the door behind her.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Ama walks down the stairs and enters the kitchen. While she makes herself a cup of tea, she can hear her MOM and DAD

talking emphatically in the other room.

MOM

He's our SON, Michael. How can you even think about this right now?

DAD

Look, he's 18 now and with his Cerebral Palsy, we both know that we need to talk about what his life might look like.

MOM

I just... can't imagine our baby boy living anywhere but here for the rest of his life.

DAD

Leanne, we deserve to have a life of our own. Let's just take a look at the care facility and see if we like it, OK? They did say he'd have a nurse with him 24/7.

Ama winces. They've been going at it like this for weeks.

She starts to prepare Luke's breakfast. She spoons piping hot oatmeal into a bowl and slices fresh bananas on top, making sure each slice is small enough for Luke to eat, and exits the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ama is laying on the couch underneath a large fuzzy blanket with her head propped up with the palm of her hand. Luke sits beside the couch in his wheelchair. The reflection from the TV before them dances on their faces and we can hear the muffled sounds of "Ratatouille" playing in the background.

AMA

You know, I never did understand why Alfredo was able to move like that just by tugging on his hair...

Ama glances at Luke, but he's still staring towards the TV.

The closing credits start to roll.

AMA

Alright, Luke, time for bed.

Ama unbuckles him from his wheelchair, first from the buckle across his waist and then the one across his body. Leaning him forward, Ama swiftly picks him up, carrying him with his head supported by her left arm and his knees hooked over her right. They make their way up the stairs together.

INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ama gently lays Luke down in his low-profile bed. We see her kiss him on the cheek and gently rub his head before standing up and closing his door.

INT. AMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ama trudges into her room, stopping by the mirror on her wall to play with her hair. She puts all her hair into a flop on top of her head and lets out a long sigh, blowing raspberries as she exhales. She looks closer at herself in the mirror. Are those bags under her eyes?

Ama throws herself into bed, immediately sinking into the mattress, and turns off the light.

She inhales...

INT. AMA'S BEDROOM - MORNING [DREAM SEQUENCE]

... She exhales.

Ama starts to stir under the covers. After a moment, her eyes open and she throws her legs over the bed.

After throwing on a hoodie, she walks down the hall to Luke's room, rubbing the sleep out of her eyes on her way.

INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING [DREAM SEQUENCE]

She opens the door to Luke's bedroom and Luke runs out of the room with a basketball, dodging his sister.

LUKE
(laughing)
Watch it, Ama! You're such a clutz
sometimes.

AMA
I am not! You're the one who's not
watching where you're going!

Luke laughs and thumps Ama on her head with his forefinger.

AMA

What- OW! What the fuck Luke?

Luke grins and shrugs. He bounds off, leaping down the stairs. Ama stands in the hallway, stunned and unable to move. Was that her sweet little Luke? Her jaw is nearly by her waist when she realizes that she's been standing there for several minutes.

AMA

(to herself)

What... the hell? Am I- There's no way.

She begins to walk mindlessly down the stairs, numb to her surroundings.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING [DREAM SEQUENCE]

Ama seems to be counting on her fingers as if calculating the possibility that Luke is suddenly a high cognitive functioning person.

Ama and Luke's parents sit at the breakfast table in the kitchen. The morning light entering through the windows is casting a tranquil, triangular sliver of light across the kitchen floor.

AMA

(to herself)

But Cerebral Palsy is irreversible...

MOM

Good morning honey! How did you sleep?

Ama is staring at Luke, who is making a bowl of cereal a few feet away from her.

MOM

Ama?

LUKE

Stop looking at me like that, weirdo.

DAD

You look spooked. Bad dream?

LUKE

(chuckling to himself)

Maybe I hit her forehead too hard.

AMA

Um, no. I- I'm not feeling well. Maybe
I should-

Her vision begins to blur and she starts to faint, falling backwards.

INT. AMA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ama lurches forwards in bed, violently gasping for air. After catching her breath, she places her head in her hands and closes her eyes.

AMA

That felt WAY too real, holy shit.

She stands up and contorts herself into a stretch. She takes a deep breath.

INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ama opens the door to Luke's room, ready for another day.

The door reveals Luke, square in front of her, standing in the middle of the room.

LUKE

(with tears in his eyes)

Ama. Look.

Ama sucks in her breath and brings her hands to her mouth. She runs to Luke and frantically touches his arms, making sure he's real. Suddenly, she drops to her knees and begins to cry. Luke kneels down to meet her.

AMA

Is this another dream?

LUKE

As far as I can tell, no, no this is real.

AMA

But I put you to bed just last-

LUKE

I know.

AMA

And you needed a wheelchair and now-

LUKE
I can't believe it myself...

AMA
(beat)
How do you feel?

LUKE
Healthy, strong...
(laughing joyfully)
like I could run for hours.

Ama begins to laugh with him, but she begins to cry a little at the same time.

AMA
Oh my God... We have to tell Mom and Dad!!

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Ama and Luke rush down the stairs, giggling and skipping steps as they go, eager to show their parents this modern-day miracle.

As they near the bottom of the stairs, Luke's legs buckle with the delicacy of a fawn just finding its legs. Ama throws her hands out to catch him by the shoulders. Luke looks at her and begins to laugh at his newfound clumsiness.

The two siblings near the kitchen and their Dad is sipping a cup of coffee and leaning against the counter, while their Mom is busy cooking a fried egg.

AMA
(frantically)
Mom!! Dad!! Luke is- Well he doesn't-
Oh, just look at him yourself!

Luke rounds the corner into the kitchen, giving his parents a beaming smile.

MOM
Luke is what? Did you get a haircut,
honey?

Ama's eyes nearly pop out of her head.

AMA
You're joking, right?

DAD
 (laughing)
 Oh wait, I know. Is it that he's never
 smiled this much in weeks? Nice teeth,
 bud.

Luke's smile fades so quickly it's as if someone erased it
 right off of his face.

LUKE
 Cerebral Palsy? Ring any bells?

MOM
 Ugh, ah yes, that disorder that our
 neighbor's friend has? Terrible. What
 about it?

LUKE
 N- Never mind...

Ama and Luke slink away, leaving their parents in the
 kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Luke throws up his hands in frustration.

LUKE
 (rambling)
 Can you believe this! They have no
 idea? I'm their SON! I've been living
 with CP all my life and they don't
 REMEMBER? How is this possible... I-

AMA
 Luke, Luke! Hey, maybe this is a
 blessing in disguise. This is a fresh
 start for you.
 (beat)
 You know what? Let's do whatever you
 want today. I wanna get to know my
 brother a little bit more.

LUKE
 (smiling)
 OK, yeah... I'd love that.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Ama walks by Luke's bedroom, a backpack dangling on one of
 her shoulders. Luke is sitting at his desk, hunched over and

scribbling something on a piece of paper.

AMA

Hey, you ready?

LUKE

Yeah, almost. Just finishing up my bucket list. God my handwriting is awful.

AMA

(chuckling)

I'm not surprised since you've never had to write before... So, what do we have on the agenda today?

LUKE

OK, I've only seen this on the TV so I'm not sure if this is real, but you know when people jump out of planes?

AMA

(laughing)

You mean sky diving?

LUKE

Yeah! That! I would love to do that.

AMA

OK, let's put a pin in that one. What else?

LUKE

(beat)

I- I want to see a meadow. Full of flowers and a lot of space so I can run through them... It's actually been a dream of mine for a long time...

AMA

(smiling)

Sure. It's a plan.

EXT. CALIFORNIA POPPY FIELDS - DAY

Ama and Luke stroll to a spot in the middle of the field. It's mid-April and the California sun is beaming down at the rows of poppies. The flowers crown their heads up, as if to meet the sun. We can see the bright orange poppies stretch as far as the eye can see, with the two siblings in the middle of it all.

AMA
How's this spot?

LUKE
Perfect!

Ama lays down a quilt to sit on. Luke sets down his backpack and pulls out two waterbottles and a bag of chips.

LUKE
It's weird how simple it seems to just... grab stuff whenever I want now.
(beat)
This meadow is... beautiful. I never knew the world was this big.

AMA
Oh, it's WAY bigger than this, trust me. So, you wanna feel what running is like?

EXT. CALIFORNIA POPPY FIELDS - CONTINUOUS

We cut to Luke sprinting across the sea of flowers. He's running as fast as he physically can, and smiling too.

Ama sits on the quilt laughing with him. Luke notices this and begins to put on a show. He starts to skip, jump, run, twirl and somersault around the quilt, making his sister belly laugh even harder.

Luke flops down next to her, out of breath.

LUKE
That! Was! Amazing!

AMA
(laughing)
I never knew you were such an entertainer! You're goofier than I thought you would be.

LUKE
What do you mean?

AMA
Oh, I've just always imagined what it would be like to interact with you if you didn't, you know, have CP.

Luke goes silent and starts to fiddle with the petals of a poppy he's picked.

LUKE

I mean it's true that I've always been this way. It's just hard for it to come out when my mind and my body are constantly disconnected from each other.

AMA

Yeah.

(beat)

I have a question. Are you... happy?

LUKE

Umm. I would say I am--I mean was--well taken care of, and I will always be thankful for that. I'm happy that I have such a loving family that has my wellbeing in mind. I'm happy that I never go hungry and that I have a roof over my head.

(beat)

But at the same time, I understand that with having CP, it means that even if I want to do something, I can't. If I want to say something, I can't. But I've learned to accept that that is my life and I've placed a lot of trust in you all to understand me. Sometimes it works out for me and sometimes it doesn't. And that means that if I'm in pain, I'll never be able to tell you where, if I'm emotionally unwell, you'll never know why. And I mean is it frustrating when you want to move a certain way, but your body won't let you? Of course. But when my mind and body connection DO match up, I take it as a sign from the universe that that's what I was exactly supposed to do in that moment.

Ama shifts her weight on the quilt and faces Luke.

AMA

(with tears in her eyes)

I'm so sorry, Luke. I-I want you to have the world, you know. I don't want you to feel like you can't express

AMA (CONT'D)
yourself. I don't know what to do, I-

LUKE
It's OK--I mean I struggle. Sometimes
it feels like my brain is on fire. I
tell myself to embrace who I am and
what I can and cannot do, but--
(voice cracking)
other days it hurts too much to try
and accept someone I'm not.

AMA
Luke--

LUKE
Phew! I'm sorry, look at me I'm a
mess.
(beat)
If it makes you feel any better, I'm
not sad all the time. I actually look
forward to our movie nights.

Luke smiles and the two siblings hug.

LUKE
Plus, I kind of like being pampered.
Makes me feel like a king.

AMA
(chuckles softly)
I'm glad you said that because guess
what? You're on your own now, bud! You
better make your own oatmeal in the
morning from now on.
(beat)
It's getting a bit dark, maybe we
should head back home.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Luke and Ama enter their home to find their parents on the
couch.

MOM
Where have you two been?

AMA
Oh, we just visited the poppy fields!

MOM

Hmph! I'm surprised. It's been a while since you two have gotten along.

Luke and Ama look at each other, smile, and shake their heads. They both start to head up the staircase to their rooms.

AMA

I'm exhausted. I think I'm gonna go to bed early tonight.

LUKE

Me too. That sprinting really tired me out.

AMA

Just wait until you feel what being sore is like tomorrow morning!

LUKE

Ooo that sounds fun, I can't wait!

AMA

(shaking her head)
Goodnight, Luke.

LUKE

Goodnight.

INT. AMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ama closes her door and stops by the mirror on her wall. She smiles at herself and turns off her lights before hopping into bed.

INT. AMA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! Ama turns off her alarm and shoots out of bed, excited to check in on Luke and figure out their plans for the day. Maybe they'll even go sky diving.

She throws on her favorite hoodie and walks down the hall.

INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ama opens the door to Luke's bedroom.

AMA

Rise and shine, Luke! What are we up to tod-

Ama stops dead in her tracks and sees Luke kneeling on his ankles, playing with his toy piano. His head hangs low with his chin against his chest, and he's struggling to play the keys accurately. His right hand is contorted to the right as he tries to strike the keys with his middle and ring fingers. Luke unsteadily raises his arm, and as he slowly lowers it, his hand bounces across the keyboard until finally landing on its final destination. The toy piano lets out a confused jumble of notes in response.

Luke slowly raises his head and side-eyes Ama. This is the best he can do.

Ama rushes to Luke's side, realizing that yesterday was simply a dream from the night before. It was just yesterday when they had watched Ratatouille and she put him to bed.

AMA

You can rely on me, Luke. I promise to try and understand you better, OK? I promise. I promise...

She pulls him in for a hug.

FADE TO BLACK