

“I Thought You Had Forgotten”

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[#Fictober18 \(October 2018\) writing challenge](#)

Day 15: “I thought you had forgotten”

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Neoma tucked a loose strand of hair behind her ear and hunched her shoulders to ward against the chill. It was easy to blame her shivers on the air, rather than the uncertainty that otherwise plagued her. Her footfalls came to a stop when she reached the building, hesitating momentarily before taking the steps to enter the lobby. Warmth flooded her and she exhaled, again hesitating at the elevators closed doors.

A year ago, she made a promise. One might argue that a promise was nothing—a little thing, something you say to appease and cajole to get what you want, or find some peace of mind, some sort of certainty. To Neoma, a promise meant far more and she would not go back on one. Especially not this one.

A year ago, Jamie came to her. He’d been drinking, and under the influence of something else—heroin, she suspected. Certainly, she had witnessed him in a far worse state, some eight years prior. To see him falling so hard after so much work to keep clean, was just as hurtful as the reason why he’d fallen.

The memory wouldn’t leave her mind and for twelve months, it loomed there.

Jamie, on the couch, blond hair a mess. His shoulders were hunched forward, eyes unfocused as he stared straight ahead. “I don’t—I don’t want to feel it any more. Please.”

“Jamie...” His pain came off him in waves, crashing against the shore of her heart. Blocking could only dampen so much, not when he projected them so strongly.

“Take it away.” He looked over at her, his eyes red-rimmed, face stricken. “Can’t you? I know you can.”

They had been over this before. She couldn’t keep using her empathy, her powers, to take away every hurt. But this one was a big one, wasn’t it? The anniversary of his sister’s death. She opened her mouth, but the protest never came.

“Please, just make it stop.” The whine in his voice was heartbreaking.

She reached out, smoothed back tendrils of hair from his face. “Shh, shh. Don’t talk. I’ll help. Okay? Just don’t talk.”

He leaned in to her touch as her fingertips caressed his scalp. He nodded minutely against her hand.

It wouldn’t help, not in the long run. It was only a temporary solution, a momentary easement of his

sorrow. The pain would eventually come back. “It won’t last,” she told him. “You know that, right? It’s only a crutch; not a solution.”

Jamie nodded again. “I know, I know,” he murmured. “Just for now. It’s too much.” Something she said must’ve struck hard because he met her stare. “It’s always too much. Next time—you have to promise next time. You have to make it go away.”

The words were heavy, like a smothering blanket enveloping over her. She couldn’t be the quick fix he wanted, to keep doing this. She’d have to help him again, like she’d done before, put herself into it with more than just the use of her powers. To make this promise would be a big burden.

But Neoma made it, whispering the words “I promise” with a nod of her own.

She’d meant it then.

And she meant it now.

Taking another deep breath, she knocked on his apartment door. When Jamie answered, his eyes were clear. He was sober, thank the gods. Would he remember what happened a year ago, or had he been too intoxicated to retain the memory?

Neoma gave a tentative smile. “Hey.”

“Hey.” He stepped back, holding the door open for her to enter. A pause followed before he spoke, quietly. “I thought you had forgotten.”

Her smile grew a little. “I don’t forget promises. Come on.” She offered her hand to him. “We have some work to do.”